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Religious Life in Coventry, 1485-1558

by

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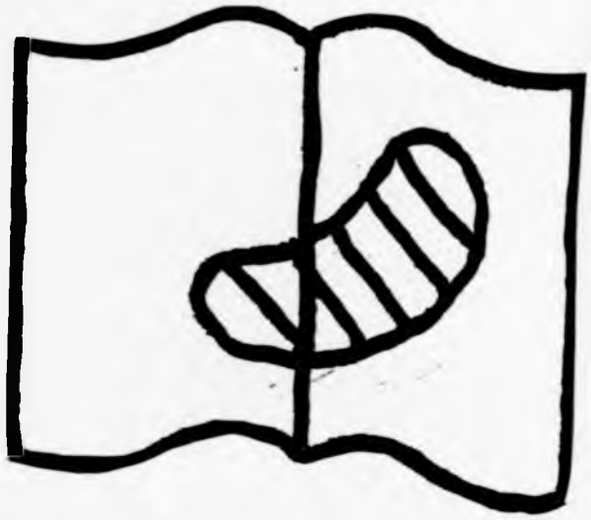

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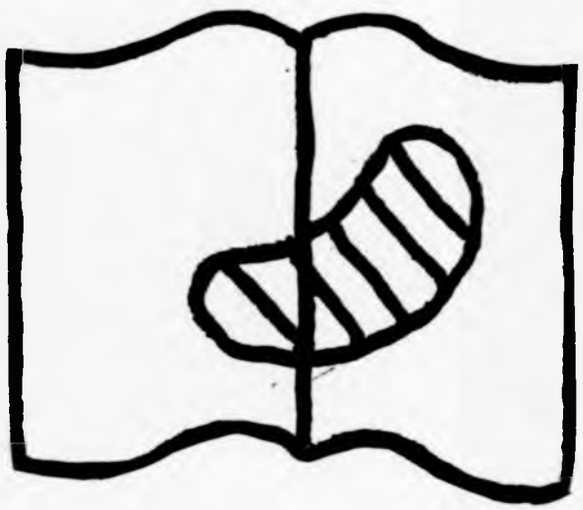

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APC	Acts of the Privy Council, ed. J.R. Dasent, 32 vols. (1890-1970)
BIHR	Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research
BL	British Library
BRL	Birmingham Reference Library
CRO	Coventry Record Office
CPR	Calendar of Patent Rolls
DNB	Dictionary of National Biography
EETS	Early English Text Society
EHR	English Historical Review
JEH	Journal of Ecclesiastical History
LB	The Coventry Leet Book or Mayor's Register Containing the Records of the City Leet or View of Frankpledge AD 1420-1555 with Divers Other Matters, transcribed and ed. by Mary Dormer Harris (Early English Text Society, cxxxiv, cxxxv, cxxxviii, cxlvi, 1907-13)
LJRO	Lichfield Joint Record Office
LP	Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII, edited by J.S. Brewer, J. Gairdner and R.H. Brodie, 21 vols. (1862-1932)
PCC	The Prerogative Court of Canterbury (with reference to wills now in the Public Record Office, London)
Reader	Transcripts of original documents, now lost, made by the Coventry antiquarian William Reader, Bodleian Library, Oxford, MSS Top.,Warwick c 4-8

SBT/GHC	Gregory-Hood Collection, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon
TBAS	Transactions and Proceedings of the Birmingham Archaeological Society
TRHS	Transactions of the Royal Historical Society
Valor	Valor Ecclesiasticus Temp. Henr. VIII Auctoritate Regia Institutus. ed. J. Caley and J. Hunter. 6 vols. (Record Commission, 1810-34), iii (1817)
VCH	Victoria County History
WRO	Warwick Record Office

Unless otherwise stated, all manuscripts cited here are in the Public Record Office, London.

All references to LP refer to document numbers and not to pages.

SUMMARY

This thesis is a study of religious life in Coventry between 1485 and 1558. Studies of this kind are necessary if we are to extend our knowledge of what was happening at the local level during the religious upheavals of the Reformation. Only when we know enough about how people in different areas reacted to the Reformation can we begin to establish general characteristics of religious change in the society. A study in depth of a Midland town has not yet been done. Coventry, because of its size and importance is a community particularly deserving of attention. It was one of the great provincial capitals of the late Middle Ages, ranking in terms of its population among the top ten urban centres outside London. Its importance owed much to its position as a centre of textile manufacture and, because of its geographical position, of regional and national trade. Coventry's economic importance was matched by its ecclesiastical status. Within its walls stood the great Benedictine cathedral priory, whose church was the see church of the 'twin' diocese of Coventry and Lichfield.

Though the Reformation naturally dominates the period, considerable space has been devoted to establishing the character of religious life well before the beginning of religious change. This provides a solid base for discussion of the changes and allows the Reformation to be viewed over an unusually long perspective. Particular attention has been paid here to those factors, especially economic, which affected religious life before the Reformation and continued to do so after it had begun. The study is to this extent concerned with all factors affecting religious life in the city during the period and not just the religious changes of the sixteenth century, with a view to presenting a balanced view of religious life in its widest context. A variety of sources have therefore been used, such as wills, records of the city and of the religious and craft guilds together with diocesan and national archives.

The evidence has been treated thematically and covers the following major topics: popular beliefs and religion in the city from the late Middle Ages to the end of Mary's reign; the role of the religious and craft guilds, the place of the clergy; the significance of Lollardy and the growth of Protestantism. While the evidence is reasonably full for Henry VII's and Henry VIII's reigns, the process of dissolution and the disposal of the confiscated lands, there is unfortunately less material for studying in detail the changes of Edward VI's reign and the Marian Restoration. The conclusion arrived at is that pre-Reformation Coventry seems to have been a traditionally devout and orthodox city. Apparently Lollardy was virtually a spent force. The progress of the Reformation owed much to the serious economic conditions in which Coventry found itself in the 1530s and 1540s. While Protestantism undoubtedly gained ground during Edward VI's reign, Coventry was far from being a Protestant city by 1553.

Coventry and Lichfield. The city and suburbs also contained several religious houses: besides the Benedictine priory, there were one Carthusian priory, the smallest of the nine Charterhouses in England, a Franciscan friary, a Carmelite friary and the hospital of St. John the Baptist. Adjoining the Greyfriars was the king's manor house of Cheylesmore. There were only two parish churches in the city, St. Michael's and Holy Trinity, both of which were exceptionally large owing to the size of the congregations they were required to accommodate. There were also two churches belonging to religious fraternities in the city; St. John's, otherwise known as Bablake church, belonging to the larger and more senior guild of Holy Trinity, and St. Nicholas', belonging to the guild of Corpus Christi. In addition, there were five chapels, all of which stood outside the city walls: the Weavers chapel of St. James and St. Christopher, St. Anne's chapel, which belonged to the Charterhouse, the chapel of Our Lady of the Tower, which housed a shrine dedicated to the Virgin and belonged to the Whitefriars, the Shermen and Tailors chapel of St. George and St. Margaret's chapel.

The pre- Reformation city was physically dominated by these religious houses and churches towering over the walls. They were almost the only stone buildings in the city most of whose houses were timber-framed. All would have been imposing, but none more so than the minster and the two parish churches, which stood together in one huge churchyard on the highest ground in the centre of the city. When John Leland visited Coventry some time after the minster had been demolished as a result of the Henrician dissolutions, he was impressed by the two parish churches which dominated the city

on their own.[1] This was not only the ecclesiastical centre of Coventry, for situated along the southern edge were the major civic and commercial buildings. St. Mary's Hall, where the city council met and the treasury was located, stood immediately opposite St. Michael's on the other side of Bailey Lane. At the south-west corner of the churchyard were the gaol and chambers belonging to the gaoler and the steward of the city. To the east of St. Mary's Hall was the large covered cloth-market known as the Drapery, which extended from Bailey Lane through to Earl Street, comprising thirty four shops, five standings and a chamber. Here were also the Wool House, the only official market for cloth in the city, and the Welsh Drapery where imported Welsh cloth was sold. Also fronting on to Bailey Lane were the halls of the city's two leading occupations, the Mercers and Drapers. Some distance to the west of this area was the open-air food market of Cross Cheaping. All the major religious, civic and commercial buildings in the city were concentrated in this small area, which also constituted the ritual centre of the city. The approaches to the churchyard and the ways about the parish churches were 'procession ways', along which the citizens paraded on the great feast days of the Church, and civic occasions.

The numbers of clergy in the early 1520s, being either inmates of the religious houses or attached to one of the parish and guild churches or craft chapels, was probably about one hundred and fifty in a city of just over six and a half thousand. The clergy made

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1. Lucy Toulmin Smith (ed.), The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535 - 1543, 5 vols., (1964), ii, 107.

up just under two and a half percent of the population.[2] Of this number some seventy were regular clergy and eighty secular clergy. The latter lived in halls in the precincts of the churches they were attached to. Adjoining the south transept of Holy Trinity was the Jesus Hall for the priests of this church. It is not known where the priests of St. Michael's lived, since there is no evidence of an identical hall attached to this church. They may have been provided with accommodation in Jesus Hall also. The priests of Trinity Guild lived in rooms within the precincts of St. John's, but it is not known where the priests of Corpus Christi Guild lived. To the indigenous clergy of Coventry, however, must be added a further indeterminate number who might be found in the city on business, visiting or just passing through. The numbers would have increased dramatically when the provincial chapter of an order represented in the city met at Coventry, or when the guilds held one of their several annual dinners, which were attended by large numbers of clergy, both regular and secular from all over the Midlands region and further afield.

A great deal of the property in the city and suburbs belonged to the religious institutions, in particular the religious houses. The priory, Charterhouse, and both friaries with their churches and domestic buildings were enclosed within extensive precincts, especially gardens, and in the case of the Greyfriars an orchard as well, and,with the exception of the last named house, they also owned rental property in the city. The priory derived just over

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2. The numbers of clergy are based upon the Musters certificates of 1522, CRO, Access. 24, ff 97-100. The population at this time is based upon a dearth census of 1520, LP, 674-75.

one third of its total yearly income from its urban property of just under three hundred and fifty pounds a year, which made it the largest single property owner in Coventry. The Charterhouse owned rents worth a little over eleven pounds and the Whitefriars rents worth but five pounds from a handful of houses and gardens. Five religious houses outside Coventry owned property in the city: Kenilworth abbey owned property worth about eight pounds a year, Combe abbey five, Stoneleigh abbey twenty shillings from a single garden and Pollesworth nunnery a mark from a single shop. The monastery of Rewley, Oxfordshire, owned property in the city worth about twelve pounds. St. John's hospital owned property worth about fifty pounds a year. Trinity Guild was the second single largest property owner in the city, whose rents totalled some two hundred and fifty pounds a year, while Corpus Christi Guild received just under eighty pounds from its property. The guild of St. Mary and Holy Cross of Chesterfield, Derbyshire, owned a single close in Coventry. Both St. Michael's and Holy Trinity owned property in the city given to them for various purposes, to support masses and prayers, lights and lamps, etc., but no rentals have survived. A few pieces of property were owned by churches outside Coventry. A chantry in Sutton Coldfield church was supported partly by rents from a close and pasture in the city, while St. Mary's collegiate church in Warwick owned a single tenement worth twenty shillings. The amount of property in Coventry owned by private individuals or secular institutions is not known, but some comparison is afforded by the fact that the corporation owned rents worth about seventy six pounds a

year.[3]

Many of these institutions made important contributions to

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3. The values of properties held by the religious houses in Coventry have been taken mainly from the Valor, iii, Coventry and Lichfield diocese, s.n., but they have been corrected by other sources where those sources are thought to be more accurate. The Valor estimated the gross yearly value of the priory's lands as £748. 13s.4d. of which £182. 4s. was derived from urban rents in the city. The Musters certificates of 1522, however, give the value of the house's lands as £1004. 6s. 8d. of which £345. 19s. 1d. came from urban rents. These figures have been preferred over those of the Valor, being confirmed by other sources. For example, see below, 59. In a letter to Cromwell shortly after he had taken the surrender of the house in 1539 Dr. London states the yearly income was 1000 marks (£666.13s. 4d), which is probably a mistake and should read £1000 (SP 1/74, fo. 37). The Valor gave the value of the Whitefriars property as £3. 6s. 8d., but a survey of the property made by the corporation in 1538 found it to be worth £5. 15s. 8d., which figure has been preferred here (SP 1/650 no. 2, fo. 238). The Valor estimated the value of the garden belonging to Stoneleigh abbey as 2s., but the Ministers Accounts for 1546-47 found it to be worth 20s. (W. B. Bickley (trans. and ed.), Abstract of the Bailiff's Accounts of Monastic and Other Estates in the County of Warwick (Dugdale Society, ii, 1923), 7). The value of the property belonging to the houses of Pollesworth and Rewley and St. Mary's, Warwick, is taken from Bickley, ibid., 80, 130, 97. The value of Trinity Guild's properties is taken from G. Templeman (ed.), The Records of the Guild of Holy Trinity, St. Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Katherine of Coventry (Dugdale Society, xix, 1944), 93, 123, and that belonging to Corpus Christi Guild from the guild's account book, CRO, A6, ff 147-48, 246-47. The value of the city warden's property is taken from SBT/GHC, DR 10/1853. The values of the properties owned by these institutions have been given as estimates because they fluctuated over the period and precise values are therefore impossible to give.

the city's economy. All employed local craftsmen, such as masons, builders, carpenters, tilers, etc., to maintain and repair their buildings and especially churches. The religious houses also provided regular employment for a number of domestic servants whose task it was to keep them running for the benefit of the inmates. These would have included 'gentlemen' or 'yeomen' servants, who waited upon the community, cooks, bakers, brewers, barbers, porters, church cleaners, etc. In 1536 the monks of the Charterhouse employed three 'yomen servaunts' and twelve others. The religious houses in Coventry and many of those in the surrounding area, including Kenilworth, Stoneleigh, Combe, Merevale, Maxstoke, Arbury and Nuneaton, doubtless obtained provisions in the city, while the guilds bought large quantities of food and drink to be consumed at one of their several yearly dinners. As well as providing much custom for the craftsmen and tradesmen of the city, the priory and some of the religious houses in the region probably acted as suppliers of wool to the city's textile industry. It can hardly be doubted that the wool from the prior's sheep flock and that from the nearby Cistercian houses of Stoneleigh, Combe and Merevale found its way into the city.

Coventry's tradesmen profited further from the constant stream of visitors to the city, attracted into the city by the religious institutions. They came as supplicants to the episcopal courts: the bishop's consistory court sat in Holy Trinity. They came as dependants on the priory's manors and as brothers of the guilds. They came as pilgrims, either to the minster where the monks preserved the head of the martyred virgin St. Osburg in a copper and gilt case, a saint who was widely venerated in the

Midlands, or to the shrine of Our Lady at the Whitefriars. This house derived a substantial part of its yearly income from the offerings made to the shrine, some £5. 18s. in 1535 according to the commissioners of the Valor. It was also the subject of a brisk souvenir trade.[4] Then there were the large numbers of people who visited the city to see the spectacle surrounding ceremonial occasions such as when the city was visited by kings, queens, princes and princesses, or on Corpus Christi Day to see the plays and when there were meetings of provincial chapters of the orders represented in the city.

Coventry was chosen on a number of occasions to host chapters. In 1489 and 1494 that of the Whitefriars met in the city, in 1505 that of the Greyfriars, while between 1498 and 1516 it was the venue for the periodic chapters of the Black Monks. This met in the city in 1498, 1504, 1507, 1509, 1510, 1512 and 1516.[5] An account of the procession which concluded the first meeting of the chapter has been preserved. It states that the chapter 'came forth at the south durre in the Mynstere & toke their way thrugh the newe bildyng downe the Bailie-lane. And the Maire & his Brethren in their scarlet Clokes with all the Craftes in theire best araye stode Vnder the Elme in seynt Michelles Chirchyard. And all the

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4. BL, Egerton MS, 2603 no. 17, ff 26-7; Valor, iii, 57; Mary Dormer Harris, Dr. Troughton's Sketches of Coventry (Coventry and London, n.d.), 7.
5. Reader, c7, f 123; City Annals, printed in F. Bliss Burbidge, Old Coventry and Lady Godiva: Being Some Flowers of Coventry History (Birmingham, n.d.), 224; VCH, Warw., II, 104-5; W. A. Pantin (ed.), Documents Illustrating the Activities of the General and Provincial Chapters of the English Black Monks, 1215-1540, 3 vols., (Camden Society, 3rd series, 1937), iii, 216-19.

pensels [streamers] of the Cite before them: whech pensels there went before the Crosse, & the Maire with his Brethren & the Craftes stode styll till the presidentes cam whom the Maire toke be the handes & welcomed them to town, & so folowed the procession: which procession went down Bailly-Lane, & so forth as is vsually vsed on seynt George day: & so into the Priory; & there was a solempne sermon seyde, where the Maire there satte betwixt both presidentes, & after sermon doon they departed euery man to his loggyng & som with the Maire to dyner, as Dyuers of them did before. And so the departed furth the Cite etc.'. A similar procession took place when the chapter of the Greyfriars met at Coventry in 1505. On this occasion, according to the City Annals, 'The Chapter of the Grey Friars was held on the Sunday of St. Bartholomew's Day, when they went in procession about the City, and were royally received at the White Friars; from whence they went to the Priory, and had a sermon from Friar Doctor Standysh'.[6]

The account of the first meeting of the chapter of the Black Monks refers to arrangements made in expectation of the influx of people into the city to see the spectacle. These arrangements were doubtless made on each occasion of this sort. The account states that, 'ayenst their comyng the Maire satte as Clerk of the market & made enquere of the price of all maner vitailles & made a boke therof', which was 'set up on the south durre in the

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6. LB, 588-89; City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 224.

Mynstere like is doon when the Kynges grace or my lorde prynce cometh to the Cite'. The aldermen of each ward were instructed to search 'all hostelries of the Cite that horsemet & mannesmete shuld be accordyng to the sisse sette, and that they shuld not sell hit to excessyve lucre'.[7] The stimulus to the city's economy provided by these processions was evidently considerable.

The religious houses were also closely involved in the every-day religious life of the city. In other towns and cities it seems that, although their presence stimulated trade and industry, they stood somewhat apart from popular religious life, which was concentrated on the parish churches.[8] The same was not true in Coventry, however, for the monks and friars were involved in many ways, but in particular through their churches, because they were used by many inhabitants to hear divine service on Sundays and at other times. Both St. Michael's and Holy Trinity were unusually large for parish churches, but they were not large enough to accommodate all the inhabitants of Coventry at the same time. There was a problem of space in both of them, because the side aisles were taken up with chapels, and from the late 1510s at least there were permanent seats installed. The friary churches were especially popular, and the Whitefriars church, which was itself exceptionally large, had probably been built with a view

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7. LB, 589

8. D. M. Palliser, The Reformation in York 1534-1553. Borthwick Papers no. 40, (1971), 3; W. T. MacCaffrey, Exeter. 1540-1640. (Harvard UP, 1958), 176; A. D. Dyer, The City of Worcester in the Sixteenth Century (Leicester, 1973), 235.

to accommodating large congregations.[9] The minster may also have been used. The two guild churches were also pressed into service. In time of plague or epidemic the minster, along with the friary churches, was frequented by the sick - to keep them away from the parish churches, where they might infect others. The result was that, for many of the citizens, direct contact with their parish church was infrequent. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the parish churches remained at the centre of religious life in the city.[10]

The explanation for there being only two parish churches in a city the size of Coventry is to be found in the city's curious historical development. From the mid-twelfth century to the mid-fourteenth century, it was divided into two halves: the Prior's Half and the Earl's Half. The former comprised the northern half of the city, which coincided with Holy Trinity parish, and the latter with the southern half, which coincided with the parish of St. Michael's. The division was brought about by charters forged by the monks of the Benedictine priory claiming that the lands given by Earl Leofric of Mercia and his wife Godiva to endow the house in 1043 included the northern half of the city with all liberties pertaining to the same. Upon their deaths, the Coventry lands belonging to Leofric and Godiva passed first to the Crown which then farmed them out to the earls of Chester. In 1355 a Tripartite Indenture was drawn up between Queen Isabella, to whom the residual rights of the earls to the Coventry lands, now known as the manor of Cheylesmore, had passed in 1330, the prior and the corporation. In return for a fee farm of £50 to the queen, and thereafter the crown, and £10 to the prior, the corporation

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9. C. Woodfield, 'Proceedings', Archaeological Journal, cxxvii (1971), 251.
10. See below, 130-41, 234-40, 250-51, 259-60.

took into its hands all the rights and privileges in the city belonging to the other two parties, although the prior retained jurisdiction over the precincts of the prior itself and a small area just to the north, amounting to perhaps a quarter of the city.

Historians of this earlier period of Coventry's history dispute the effects which the division had upon its development. The traditional view is that the city was divided into two distinct lordships which developed independently and even in competition with each other. This view is questioned by a second group who, while recognising that the city did have two lords, believe that there were strong bonds between the two halves and that relations between them were 'elastic'. For the most part, therefore, the city developed as a single entity. The most recent commentator, however, believes that more attention still needs to be paid to the physical areas of the city represented by the division when seeking to explain its development, and returns to the traditional interpretation of events, which the present writer also believes to be the case.[11]

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11. The traditional view was first expressed by Mary Dormer Harris, Life in an Old English Town : a History of Coventry from the Earliest Times compiled from Official Records (1898). Her view was generally adopted by Joan Lancaster in VCH. Warw., viii, 256-60, and somewhat modified in her 'Coventry' in M.D. Lobel and W.H. Johns (eds.), The Atlas of Historic Towns, ii, Bristol; Cambridge; Coventry; Norwich (1975). The view expressed by these two authors was either questioned partly or wholly by A Dibben, Coventry City Charters, The Coventry Papers (1969), P.R. Cross, 'Coventry Before Incorporation : A Re-interpretation', Midland History, ii (1974), 137-51, and R.H.C. Davis, to begin with in his 'An Unknown Coventry Charter', EHR, lxxxvi (1971), 539-45, and then in his The Early History of Coventry, (Dugdale Society Occasional Papers, xxiv, Oxford, 1976). C. V. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a City: Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages, (CUP, 1979), 118, returns to the traditional interpretation of the city's earlier history.

The division is reflected in the development of the religious institutions. The existence of only two parish churches is one example, but another is the two religious fraternities: Trinity Guild probably originated as an association of rich tradesmen in St. Michael's parish and Corpus Christi Guild as an association of rich tradesmen in Holy Trinity parish.[12]

The guilds played an important role in the spiritual life of the wealthy inhabitants of Coventry.[13] They were inseparably connected with the doctrine of Purgatory, for their primary purpose was to provide members with a good funeral, masses and prayers for their health so long as they should live and for their soul after their death. Trinity Guild, the larger and senior of the two, maintained thirteen full-time priests and Corpus Christi five. They do not appear to have been involved in the every-day religious life of the city, though they may have been present as a body on some of the great religious festivals. Corpus Christi Guild, as its name suggests, was responsible for the annual procession which marked the feast of Corpus Christi, a high point in the city's religious calendar. The guilds also fulfilled social functions. They gave assistance to those of their members who were poor or aged, by providing accommodation at a reduced rent, or free of rent altogether, and alms for their livelihood, and took care of the sick.

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12. Mary Dormer Harris, op. cit., 95.

13. The standard works on the guilds are H. F. Westlake, The Parish Gilds of Medieval England (1919) and Lucy Toulmin Smith (ed.), English Gilds, (EETS, orig. ser. 40 (1870). An up-to-date interpretation of them and their importance is J. J. Scarisbrick, The Reformation and the English People (Oxford 1984), chapt. 2, 19-39.

They operated loan fund systems whereby members could obtain money to start their business again, provided that any previous failure had not been due to negligence or improvidence. Trinity Guild made an important contribution to education, through its maintenance of a grammar school. The guilds also acted as executors and overseers for deceased members.[14]

Guild members came together on the feast days of the saints under whose patronage their guild had been founded which were known as "general days". On such occasions a special mass was celebrated in the guild church, followed by a dinner. Trinity Guild was an amalgamation of no less than four smaller guilds: St. Mary's, St. John the Baptist's, St. Katherine's and Holy Trinity, and so had four feast days: the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (25 March), the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (29 August), St. Katherine's Day (25 November) and Trinity Sunday, which was a moveable feast. The account of the retiring master of the guild was presented on St. Luke's Day (18 October), when the annual general meeting of the guild was held, new officers elected, the guild statutes read out, and important business conducted.[15] Corpus Christi Guild, or to give it its full title, the Guild of Corpus Christi and St. Nicholas, although not an amalgamation of two smaller fraternities like Trinity Guild, held three annual dinners. Its

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14. Most of these functions are taken from guild ordinances of the late fourteenth century: the guild certificates of 1389, summarised in Westlake, op. cit., 230-31, and Toulmin Smith, op. cit., 226-32 and 234-35. See also W. Dugdale, The Antiquities of Warwickshire (1656), 191-92; T. Sharpe, History of the Coventry Guilds. CRO, Unofficial Accessions 19; Templeman, op.cit., 176-78.

15. Templeman, op. cit., 177.

members met for a Lenten Dinner on the Wednesday before Palm Sunday, for a Goose Dinner, the date of which varied between mid-May and early August, and a Venison Dinner, the date of which varied between mid-August and late November. The Lenten Dinner was the principal general day of the guild when most members attended. The annual general meeting was heldon the feast of the conversion of St. Paul (25 January).[16] These dinners were probably held in St. Mary's Hall in the case of Trinity Guild and St. Nicholas' Hall in the case of Corpus Christi Guild, which halls belonged to the respective guilds. There is some evidence to suggest that Trinity Guild met on other occasions during the year besides these general days. For example, surviving fragments of the Guild's records for the year 1532-33 list expenses for large quantities of food and drink consumed on St. Mathew's Day (21 September), on mid-Lent Sunday (the fourth Sunday after Shrove Tuesday) and on the feast of St. John before the Latin Gate (6 May). There is no clear evidence of Corpus Christi Guild meeting at other times, although the accounts note the collections of subscriptions on a number of occasions other than the three general days. The guild as a whole may have met on these occasions. Both guilds met on the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (24 June) and St. Peter's Day (29 June), for the annual marchings of the watch.[17]

Membership of the two guilds was not restricted to the inhabitants of Coventry. Both guilds could boast members from all over

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16. CRO, A6, fos. 70, 23, 56, passim. The Goose Dinner is last mentioned in 1500, ibid., fo. 107.

17. Templeman, op. cit., 154-55; CRO, A6, ff 3, 13, 30, 39, 40; See below, 170-76.

the country. Moreover, membership was not restricted to laymen, but included both regular and secular clergy. To the dinners came the heads of many religious houses in the Midlands and further afield, and occasionally some of the brethren and sisters. The secular clergy came mainly from the towns and parishes in the immediate area of the city, although some did travel greater distances.[18] The two guilds were lay controlled, however. They were run by the wealthy inhabitants of the city for their own benefit, and though they permitted clergy to join there is nothing to suggest that the latter ever had a say in the running of them. Their membership was welcomed, however, and one of the most important functions of the guilds was to provide a forum in which the citizens of Coventry and the clergy met socially.

The guilds were much more than social and religious fraternities, however. They were intimately connected with the corporation, although the lack of records belonging to either of them makes it difficult to establish exactly what the relationship was. The ruling classes in the city dominated them and they have been described as local corporations at prayer.[19] No one held guild and civic office at the same time, however, although guild office was required of the aspirant to civic office, and the mastership of Trinity Guild was the highest office in the city. Usually within four years of becoming a member of a middling to wealthy craft, from which prospective officers were most often selected, the aspiring individual would be admitted to Corpus Christi Guild, which was

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18. See below, 421-25.

19. Scarisbrick, op. cit., 22.

made up of the younger and more junior office holders. Membership of the guild was discontinued about the time the rank of sheriff was achieved, and from sheriff a man went on to become mayor. A year or two before he achieved this rank, however, he became master of Corpus Christi Guild, and as such headed the ex-sheriffs and other junior officers. After a year as mayor he immediately, or within a year, became master of Trinity Guild.[20] The master of this guild held an extremely important position in the city. He took precedence only after the mayor in all meetings of the city council: his name regularly appears at the head of the list of city councillors in the corporation records. He was involved in the oversight of not only the finances of his own guild, but also those of Corpus Christi Guild and the corporation: the mayor presented his yearly account before the master of Trinity Guild, and he held one of the keys to the common chest of the city. He was also a Justice of the Peace.[21]

Trinity Guild possessed by far the best properties in Coventry. Generally speaking, the property in St. Michael's parish was more valuable than that in Holy Trinity parish, and Trinity Guild's was found, for the most part, in the former parish which lay in the wards of Bailey Lane, Smithford Street, Earl Street and Gosford Street, though it also held some property in Cross Cheaping ward in Holy Trinity parish. The property in Bailey Lane ward was the most valuable in the city. In Bailey Lane and Earl Street ward

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20. Phythian-Adams, op. cit., 120-21.

21. Templeman, op. cit., App. I, 162-69, for a list of masters of the guild which can be checked against the lists of council members in the Leet Book.

was found the Drapery, while in Cross Cheaping, whose property values were second only to those in Bailey Lane, was the open-air market for food stuffs. It is to be expected that the valuable property was to be found in the commercial centres of the city. The property belonging to Corpus Christi Guild was concentrated mainly in Holy Trinity parish in Cross Cheaping, with others in Bishop Street and Spon Street wards. The property in Cross Cheaping ward may have been the most valuable in the city, but the property in both Bishop Street and Spon Street wards was of very poor value, and only one other ward property was worth less than these, that in Jordan Well. The property owned by the priory lay mainly in Holy Trinity parish in the wards of Cross Cheaping, Bishop Street and Jordan Well. That belonging to St. John's Hospital was found mainly in Bishop Street ward in Holy Trinity parish and Broad Gate and Spon Street wards in St. Michael's, the property in the latter being among the least valuable in the city. Trinity Guild's property was the most valuable in the city, therefore, and even that belonging to the city wardens could not compare with it. Though situated for the most part in St. Michael's parish, they were found mainly in Earl Street and Broad Gate wards, with some in Bishop Street ward in Holy Trinity parish.[22]

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22. Phythian-Adams, op. cit., 164, established the value of rents in ten wards of the city from the Musters certificates of 1522 and the tax enumeration for the lay subsidy of the following year. The rentals used to include a Trinity Guild rental for 1532-33, Templeman, op. cit., 94-121, and a rental of Corpus Christi Guild for 1505-6, CRO, A6, fos. 147-48. The location of the property belonging to the priory and St. John's hospital is taken from LP, XX, i, 1335 (51), 1335 (39), and that of the city wardens property, SBT/GHC, DR 10/1853.

The guilds, especially Trinity Guild, were to all intents and purposes at one with the corporation. At least this is the impression gained from the sources: for the guild can almost always be found in the background of corporation affairs. Occasionally they come to the fore, however. Both Trinity and Corpus Christi Guild paid sums of money each year to the mayor, and in 1522 they stepped in when the sheriffs pleaded that they could no longer afford to pay the recorder's yearly fee of twenty marks. Trinity Guild paid £6. 13s. 4d., Corpus Christi Guild eight marks (£5. 6s. 8d.) and the city wardens five marks (£3. 6s. 8d.) that year and they were also made responsible for the recorder's fee for the next three years. Trinity Guild also took on the responsibility of paying the prior's yearly fee farm of £10 for the whole community in return for rights to certain common lands of the city.[23] The incestuous relationship between the corporation and Trinity Guild is also reflected in the fact that the latter owned the collection of shops and wool halls which comprised the Drapery, while the sale of cloth here was regulated by the corporation. The guilds and the corporation kept their chests separate, but the financial advantages of an arrangement whereby the latter could draw on the resources of the former are obvious. When the city's taxes, etc., were due, it could always be shown that the corporation had nothing, while the guilds owed nothing.[24]

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23. LB, 514-15, 681, xviii; Templeman, op. cit., II4-I7.

24. Alice Sophia Amelia Green, Town Life in the Fifteenth Century 2 vols., (1894), ii, 216-17, suggested this was the relationship between the guilds and corporations in Coventry and Lynn, Norfolk.

There were other fraternities in the city besides Trinity and Corpus Christi guilds, which were more exclusively devotional in character. The evidence for some of them is scant, their existence known only through a reference here and there in the wills. The only reference to a fraternity of the Priory is in William Haddon's will of 1493, where he bequeathed 6s. 8d. to it. In 1518 John Haddon, probably the brother of the above, bequeathed 20s. to the fraternity of the Holy Ghost, and the same year John Barnabe gave 6s. 8d. 'to the box of the holy gosties pardone', which probably had something to do with the fraternity. These are the only references to it.[25] The best documented example of one of these fraternities is that of a confraternity of 'clothiers' which called itself the confraternity of Jesus. Its name doubtless stemmed from the popularity of the cult of the Holy Name in the late middle ages. It was relatively new, having been founded as recently as 1465, when the then mayor of Coventry, John Pinchbeck, caused a weekly mass to be said in St. Michael's before an altar dedicated to Jesus Christ.[26] In 1468, the confraternity obtained a papal indulgence of three years and three 'quarantines' to all those, who, being truly penitent and having been confessed, visited the altar on the feasts of St. Michael and the dedication of the church, from the first to second vespers, and gave alms for its conservation, maintenance and ornamentation. The indulgence stated that the mass had been instituted because plague often visited the city, (there had probably been a visitation in 1463-5).[27] and it was hoped

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25. PCC, 1 Vox; 17 Ayloffe; F16 Ayloffe.

26. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 220.

27. Phythian-Adams, op. cit., 35 n. 14.

that God, appeased by the prayers of the faithful, might deliver the city from further visitations. In 1470 another papal indulgence was granted of five years and five 'quarantines' to all those who visited St. Michael's on the feasts of Christmas and the Nativity of St. John the Baptist between first and second vespers and gave alms for the maintenance of the altar.[28]

The confraternity was probably wealthy, given the crafts from which its membership would have been drawn. The term 'clothiers' would undoubtedly have included the Mercers, Drapers and Dyers, the three leading crafts in the city. It was also a prominent confraternity. The City Annals for 1488 state that, 'This year was great peace throughout the realm, and for joy the Church-wardens of St. Michael's, and other well disposed people, brought to St. Michael's a great bell, and called it Jesus Bell; this motto was written about it: 'Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judæorum in me misericordia'.[29] The 'well-disposed' people were probably members of the confraternity. It was for the most part a parochial confraternity, drawing its membership from St. Michael's parish, though it originally styled itself a confraternity of 'clothiers' which might suggest it was an occupational one. In fact, with the exception of the Dyers, most of those working in the textile industry were found in St. Michael's. In Bailey Lane ward were mercers and in Earl Street and Much Park Street wards drapers and weavers. Bailey Lane and Earl Street wards contained the halls of the Mercers and Drapers as well as the

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28. J.A. Tremlow (ed.), Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland : Papal Letters A.D. 1458-71, ii, 644, 761-62, 772.

29. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 223.

Drapery, of course. In Gosford Street ward were found concentrations of shermen and tailors, and just inside Gosford Gate was the site of the sheep fair. In this parish were also found those who serviced these crafts, such as cardmakers and sheargrinders. There were exceptions, however, for concentrations of skinners were found in Earl Street ward. This is explained by the location of their drying houses and pools outside the city in the Little Park, because some of the processes associated with the occupation were particularly obnoxious and not permitted inside the walls.

Holy Trinity parish contained the city's marketing centre. In Cross Cheaping ward were found the markets for food-stuffs, grain, meat, poultry and fish, and further north, over the river in Bishop Street ward, probably the livestock markets for horses and cattle. In Cross Cheaping ward were found heavy concentrations of butchers as well as some tanners. Tanners were also to be found in the adjacent Spon Street ward, along with numbers of whittawers. Again there were some exceptions to the general rule. The need for access to a ready supply of water meant that certain industries would naturally gravitate to Holy Trinity parish, for the river Sherbourne ran mainly through it. Dyers were found in this parish, therefore, although their occupation was associated with the textile industry. Cappers were also to be found in this parish in Jordan Well ward though they also belonged to the textile trades.[30]

Despite a few exceptions, the view that there was a marked occupational bias in each parish can be upheld. The explanation

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30. Phythian-Adams, op. cit., 159-61.

for this lies in the historical development of the city.[31] The inhabitants of Holy Trinity were probably excluded from the confraternity. But, not to be eclipsed totally by their counterparts in St Michael's, in 1478 the parishioners began a Jesus Mass of their own in Holy Trinity church.[32] There is nothing to suggest that this was intended to be the centre of a confraternity made up of parishioners of Holy Trinity. Unlike those of St Michael's, the inhabitants of this parish seem to have contented themselves with just the mass and never formed a fraternity. The story perhaps shows, however, how the historical division of the city continued to affect its daily life.

The two great religious guilds and the confraternity of Jesus were all inter-occupational to a greater or lesser degree. Their memberships were drawn mainly from the crafts in the city, of which there were thirty-three and which were also, of course, organised into guilds. Despite what is often said, these craft guilds were in many ways identical with the religious guilds. Though concerned with regulating and protecting the economic interests of their members, they had religious and social functions which were probably just as important at this time. Hence one must beware drawing too sharp a distinction between craft guilds and the strictly 'religious' ones - as some historians have undoubtedly done. One obvious reason why craft guilds acquired religious and social functions was that, for many poorer craftsmen, membership of, say, Trinity Guild, with an entry fee probably £5, would have been out of the question; while fines of less exalted guilds would have been beyond the reach of younger people. So it was that Coventry's carpenters, for example, generally seem to have

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31. Lancaster, Atlas of Historic Towns, 5.

32. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 222.

joined Corpus Christi Guild, whose fines were probably somewhat less, much later in life than was normal.[33] Many would not have been able to join either of the guilds at all, but through his craft a person could enjoy to a lesser extent the benefits conferred upon members of the guilds.

The services which craft guilds provided for members can be discovered from their ordinances. Their extent was, of course, inevitably governed by the wealth of the individual craft. A number of crafts maintained priests to pray for the health of the craft members while alive and for their souls when dead. The chapels maintained by the Weavers and Shermen and Tailors have already been mentioned. Other crafts maintained chapels in one of the parish churches. In St. Michael's the Mercers had the combined chapel of St. John and St. Katherine, the Drapers Our Lady's chapel, the Cardmakers and Saddlers St. Thomas' chapel, the Smiths St. Andrew's chapel and the Girdlers St. Anne's chapel. In Holy Trinity the Butchers and Tanners both had chapels, but to which saints they were dedicated is not known. The Dyers had St. Anne's chapel in this church. It should be noted that the location of the chapels was not arbitrary, but reflected the occupational biases of the two parishes. It might be pointed out that the Shermen and Tailors chapel stood at Gosford Gate in the ward where these occupations were concentrated. Only ten out of the thirty three crafts maintained priests, it seems. Most of the crafts expected their members to attend the weddings and funerals of one of their number, and in the latter case the bearers of the

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33. Phythian-Adams, op. cit., 122. For an excellent definition of the crafts at this time, see D.C. Coleman, The Economy of England, 1450-1750, (OUP, 1977), 73-4.

hearse were usually four members of the deceased's craft.[34] The more wealthy crafts also provided accommodation at a reduced rent or free of rent altogether and alms for those members who had fallen into poverty or were aged.[35] None of the crafts appears to have operated a loan fund system to help those of their number who had lost their businesses, but it is difficult to be sure. Often an individual made his craft executor of his will, and if his craft maintained a priest he might ask him to perform masses and prayers for his soul. In the case of crafts which did not maintain priests an individual might ask his craft to oversee the provision he had made for his soul's health. The crafts were also closely involved in the religious life of the city. They were responsible for staging the Corpus Christi Plays, and those crafts which maintained priests assisted the parish priests in the saying of divine service on the major Church festivals during the year. However, their most notable contribution was the regulation of religious observance on Sundays and the religious festivals during the year.[36]

From the foregoing it is clear that the crafts functioned in many ways like religious guilds and were fraternities in every sense of the word. The point can be underlined with two examples. The Butchers referred to themselves in their craft accounts as the fraternity of St. Anthony, a clear indication of the view they took of themselves. Moreover, the combined craft of Shermen and Tailors was in fact a guild: it was licensed to hold lands in mortmain for

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34. Phythian-Adams, op. cit., 86, 93-94.

35. Cappers, accounts, f 66; Girdlers, CRO, Access. 24, f 5; Weavers, CRO, Access. I00/I7/I, ff 3, I3, 22, 24, 26.

36. D. M. Palliser, 'The Trade Gilds of Tudor York', in P. Clark and P. Slack (eds.), Crisis and Order in English Towns I500-I700: Essays in Urban History (I972), I09-III, briefly mentions the religious and social functions of the crafts of this city.

the support and maintenance of two priests. This was the only craft so licensed, probably because Trinity Guild and Corpus Christi Guild blocked attempts by the crafts to attain comparable status. The crafts were much more than organisations of economic regulation, therefore, and through their religious and social functions merged imperceptibly with the guilds.[37]

The members of a craft came together at least four times a year on 'quarterage days', when they paid their subscriptions. On each occasion a mass was celebrated followed by a dinner, and on one of the four days the craft would hold its annual general meeting when the account of the retiring master was presented, the craft ordinances read out and any business conducted. The Bakers and Fullers held their annual general meetings on the same day, St. Clement's Day (23 November), the Butchers on St. Luke's Day (18 October), the Carpenters on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (8 September), the Cordwainers on the Monday after St. Denis' Day (9 October), the Drapers on New Year's Day, the Smiths on St. Loy's Day (I December), the Tilers on St. Stephen's Day (2 August) and the Weavers on St. Osburg's Day (23 January). This latter craft was involved with the monks of the priory in the celebrations which took place on this saint's day. In the case of crafts who did not maintain their own priest one was probably hired to celebrate mass before their dinners. In the case of the Carpenters and Tilers, however, a friar was employed to say mass. The accounts of the

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37. Reader, c7, fo. 100; CPR, 1436-41, 308-9 is a grant dated 9 March 1438 to the Tailors and Fullers. The latter separated from the former in 1448, LB, 234, and G.W. Fretton, Memorials of the Fullers or Walkers Guild of Coventry. (Coventry, 1878), 9-10.

former list payments to a friar of the Whitefriars to celebrate mass on the occasion of its annual general meeting, or its Harvest Dinner, as the accounts refer to it. The Tilers ordinances state that members 'shall come to the White Friars on Seynt Stevens day and there, yn worshipe of God and our lady, to offere at the hige Messe'. It is not known where the crafts met for their dinners. The Weavers met at St. Nicholas' Hall, according to their accounts. It is possible that the Carpenters held their dinners at the Whitefriars, for the craft accounts reveal that the domestic servants of this house prepared the dinner: payments are listed to the cook and bottler of the Whitefriars.[38]

These were the functions of the above institutions in pre-Reformation Coventry, therefore, up to the early 1530s. This has been taken as the terminal date of the examination because the economic condition of the institutions which we have been examining here had by then so deteriorated that they may well have been unable to maintain the above functions. By this time Coventry had endured more than fifty years of economic decline and decay which had not left them unaffected. All had experienced decreasing incomes, as their property decayed and their rents fell, which in turn affected their ability to function as they once had. Their condition will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters, but the crucial fact

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38. Bakers, CRO, Access. 8, f 8; Fullers, Reader, c7, f II2; Butchers, BL, Harleian MS, 6466, f I7; Carpenters, CRO, Access. 3, f '2I; Cordwainers, CRO, Access. I4, f 2; Drapers, CRO, Access. 154 (Daffern), f I; Tilers, Reader op. cit., f 7; Weavers, CRO, Access. I00/I7/I, f 2; Smiths, Reader, op. cit., f 85; Carpenters, op. cit., f 24; Tilers, loc. cit., Weavers, loc. cit.; Carpenters, op. cit., f 24.

is that the institutions we have been considering were being most severely threatened by economic adversity precisely at the time when the first moves were being made in the English Reformation. [39]

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39. In his recent social and economic study of Coventry, C. V. Phythian-Adams argued that the late 1510s and early 1520s was the period in which the city's economic fortunes reached their lowest ebb. See Phythian-Adams, op. cit., 33-67. The present writer believes that, while the city's economic fortunes may have suffered at this time, they suffered even more a decade or so later when the city entered into a period of steep decline and decay.

CHAPTER II

Popular Religious Beliefs

Would that we could know how 'ordinary' men and women thought and felt during the religious upheavals of the Reformation. For the most part, however, the sources of the period are silent about them: they made no impact upon events, and so their views are nowhere recorded. Those who became prominent through their actions, such as martyrs, refugees, conspirators and rebels, are untypical, and are few compared with the total population of the country. What we are concerned with here are the views of the majority, and a 'silent majority' at that, and not those of an extremist minority. Probably the only source which can tell us something about the religious beliefs and attitudes of this majority are their wills, which already have attracted the attention of a number of historians, particularly those engaged in regional and local studies of religious life in the sixteenth century. Wills were primarily a means of disposing of goods and chattels, but at this time they were also statements of religious beliefs: most of them, with few exceptions, began with a religious preamble in which the testator disposed of his soul, followed by his wordly legacies, which are often intermixed with others of a distinctly religious nature. The religious bequests found in wills vary, depending on the personal beliefs of the testator concerned and on the official doctrine of the time. They are not easy to interpret. But interpretation is becoming easier, as it must, as more and more studies of them are done. By noting the different types of religious bequests and their frequency at any time, it is possible to get a rough idea of changing religious attitudes and, what is probably more important, of the tempo of those changes.

An analysis has been made of all the religious bequests to be found in the surviving Coventry wills between 1485 and 1558, which number 447, and the results tabulated. They are presented in the Appendix. The analysis has been conducted on a yearly basis, which permits the changes in the patterns of religious bequests to be better identified and also permits some interpretation of the speed at which they occurred. The results are not definitive - first because not all the wills from the period have survived, and secondly because, even if they had, they would not tell the whole story on their own, as will become evident. They are presented as an indication of, rather than a pronouncement upon, religious beliefs in Coventry in the period, albeit they are probably a good indicator: much of what they tell us is supported by other sources. They cannot be used in isolation, however, and so, though they provide the main source material for this chapter, other sources which contribute to our understanding of the religious beliefs and attitudes of the citizens will be used.

Caution is needed in interpreting wills. To begin with, testators were not representative of society's opinions as a whole. They were usually older members and were drawn from the wealthier ranks, since those without property to dispose of had no reason to make wills, and they were usually made in anticipation of death. Nevertheless, there are within the ranks of the 'wealthy' many degrees of wealth. The Coventry wills represent a large section of the population of the city from the rich merchants down to many quite humble craftsmen, and there are a significant number of wills belonging to widows. From the ranks of the wealthy were drawn the civic officials, such as the wardens or bailiffs, chamberlains,

stewards or town clerks, sheriffs, coroners and mayors, the masters of the two religious guilds in the city and the aldermen. Lower down the scale are found the city sergeants and the craft officials, such as masters, wardens and clerks. Below these are the wills of individuals who never held office of any sort. We would have no knowledge of them but for their wills. However, before the mid-1520s wills belonging to these people do not exist in any numbers, but increasingly from this time examples of their wills do survive. Wills do not represent all sections of the community, therefore, but they do represent the views of a large and significant minority.

Moreover, a major problem inherent in the use of wills is that there is no sure way of determining whether or not the voice we hear when we read a will is that of the testator or the person who wrote it, usually a priest. The preamble and some of the initial bequests, such as those to pay for burial expenses and for tithes 'omitted' or 'forgotten' were probably the work of the priest, who would have been quick to remind the testator to make the former and jog his memory about any outstanding payments of the latter. The bequests which are found in the body of a will are an entirely different matter, however, and almost certainly reflect the wishes of the testator. In many cases they are so varied and detailed, with many qualifying clauses and contingency plans for this or that eventuality, which depended upon an intimate knowledge of the testator's personal affairs, that any influence, priestly or otherwise, can be ruled out. A testator is more likely to reveal his personal religious beliefs in the religious bequests he makes in the body of his will, therefore, and it is with these which the following study is primarily concerned.

We will begin by looking at the religious bequests in the wills

in the pre-Reformation period and that of the Henrician Reformation: between 1485 and 1547. What the wills show is that the inhabitants of Coventry were overwhelmingly committed to the old religion right up to the time it was swept away by the religious changes. For example, testators were pouring money and gifts into their parish churches, especially from the last years of the fifteenth century up to the late 1520s and early 1530s. Almost three in four testators made some form of bequest to their parish church. They made bequests to repair them and undertake new building, to embellish and adorn them, their high altars and the many side altars and chapels, to maintain the many masses which were celebrated in them and to support the many lights which burned before altars, roods, statues and paintings. Frequently testators made a number of bequests to their parish churches: perhaps something to the church itself and to its high altar, as well as to the side chapels and altars, sometimes to all of them at one time, which often amounted to a considerable sum when added together: so far as can be ascertained from the wills, there were six chapels and twelve altars, including the high altar in St. Michael's, and seven chapels and nine altars, including the high altar in Holy Trinity.

The volume of bequests to St. Michael's and Holy Trinity will be evident from the tables in the Appendix: a list here would have to be enormous to convey an adequate impression. But the tables only show bequests to a particular altar or chapel, etc., and do not indicate when a testator made bequests to several. An example of a testator who made multiple bequests is Humphrey Grene, a dyer, sheriff in 1508, bailiff in 1509 and between this time and his death, in 1516, a regular member of the city council. He made bequests to his parish church of Holy Trinity and to six altars and one chapel. He bequeathed 3s.4d. to the 'church work', 12d. to the Jesus altar

and a 'crucyfix of sylver and gylt to hang aboute the necke of thymage of Jesu ther', 12d. to the altars of Our Lady and St. Anne, 8d. to Corpus Christi chapel and 4d. to the altars of St. Andrew, St. Thomas and All Hallows. The value of the crucifix is not stated, though it must have been high, but the sum total of the other bequests was 8s.[1] Sometimes testators made bequests to both parish churches in Coventry, and occasionally to parish churches elsewhere: examples of testators making bequests to three, four and on one occasion six other churches are to be found in the Coventry wills. In 1512 Henry Smyth, the son of John Smyth of Coventry, gentleman, bequeathed 10s. to his parish church of Burton Hastings, 'in the honour of all hallows', 20s. to St. Mary's Stoneleigh, 20s. to Hodnell church, 'in the honour of saint Ellen to be bestowed in lights of waxe and a plate to sett it in', 10s. to Claybrooke church, Leicestershire, 3s.4d. to Shernford church and 10s. to Bulkington church.[2]

The impression is that bequests were proportionate to wealth. This is true of all bequests, both religious and secular. Moreover, it seems that testators gave as much as they could afford. This can be illustrated through a comparison of the bequests made by two testators of different wealth. Our first example is William Pysford the elder, a grocer and member of the wealthy mercantile family of Coventry and Leicester. He was warden in 1486, sheriff in 1494 and mayor of Coventry in 1501. His will of 1517, shows that he owned property in Coventry and the area about the city, including a farm

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1. PCC, 22 Holder; LB, 623, 624, 630, et seq.

2. PCC, 25 Fetiplace.

at Baginton, and other property in London. Pysford made several generous bequests to his parish church. He instructed his executors to purchase 'four copes of a Suyte of vestments' to the value of £40 or £50 for St. Michael's, his parish church, and gave 40s. towards the repair of same. He also made bequests of 6s.8d. to the Jesus altar and 20s. to St. Katherine's altar, 'unto the reparacion of suche vestments as ben bilonginge to the awter', in the same church. Our contrasting example is that of John Tedde, a grasier, who made his will in 1516. His will suggests that he was comparatively wealthy: he possessed the house he lived in, which had a bakehouse over the top. He held no civic office, however, and the only reference to him in the surviving official corporation records is in 1496, when he was brought before the Michaelmas Leet charged with one Hobley 'that they had bought & sold in gret hides contrarie to the ordenaunces theruppon made etc.'. His bequests to his parish church of Holy Trinity included 3s.4d. to the high altar and 12d towards repairs, 12d. to the altars of Jesus and Our Lady and 4d. to every other altar in the same church. The total value of Pysford's bequests amounted to a possible £53 6s.8d., while Tedde's were worth but 7s.4d. Doubtless the bequests of both represented a significant proportion of their wealth.[3]

Testators were also contributing to the building work being carried out on the parish churches in Coventry in the last years of the fifteenth and the first quarter or third of the sixteenth centuries. From the mid-1480s to the late 1500s extensive work was being done on

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3. PCC, 9 Ayloffe, LB, 528, 557, 600; LJRO, Tedde, John, Register of Wills, B/C/10, LB, 581.

the rear of St. Michael's, involving the high altar and a 'rear door' In 1489 Henry Boteler gave 6s.8d. to the repair of the high altar, followed by Humphrey Wood in 1495 who gave 2s., John Tomlinson in 1496 who gave 5s. and John Mathew in 1501 who gave the large sum of 40s. The altar, having been built, was then gilded: in 1501 Richard Howes gave 6s.8d. for this purpose and in 1508 Nicholas Fitzherbert gave a further 20s. There are two references to the 'rear door', the first in 1492, when John Fisher bequeathed 40s. for its repair. He also gave 6s.8d. for general rapairs and 20s. to buy ornaments for the new high altar. The second reference is from 1500, when William Smalley bequeathed 6s.8d. to the 'making' of the same. There is one general bequest to this work, from William Hopkins, who, in 1500 bequeathed 20s. 'to the new work in the chansell'.[4] In addition there are several bequests for 'repairs', which may have been intended to support the work going on in this part of the church. Bequests for repairs were probably in response to work being carried out, and there are bequests for repairs found in the wills right up to 1546, if few in number in later years.[5]

Unfortunately, these few bequests in the wills are practically all the references to the building work on St. Michael's. The churchwardens' accounts have not survived, which would undoubtedly have provided a full picture of the work. There are a few references in other sources, however, such as in the Chamberlains' accounts for the late fifteenth century. A list of individuals whose murage payments are outstanding, included Richard Everton, deceased. His

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4. PCC, 30 Milles; 25 VOX; 17 Horne; 28 Horne; 22 Moore; 10 Bennett; 19 Dogett; 20 Moore; 23 Moore.

5. See Appendix, Table 4.

will is not extant, but from references to him in the corporation records which cease after 1482, it can be assumed that he died shortly after this time. For some reason, which is not explained in the accounts, Everton's arrears, which amounted to £3, were given by his executors 'to ye newe wark of the high Auter of Seynt Michael's'.[6] The other reference to the work on this church comes from the Smiths' accounts for 1501-2. They record that Thomas Parker, 'Maister Massone of the Warke off Sent Michell's', was admitted a brother of their craft.[7]

Similarly, work was being carried out on Holy Trinity. Bequests for 'repairs' and the 'church work' are found throughout the wills between the late 1480s and the early 1540s. However, no mention is made of specific work. In 1489 Henry Boteler bequeathed 6s.8d. for 'necessary repairs', although he does not state what they were. In 1509 Henry Marler gave 20s. 'towarde the coveringe of the Trinitie church', suggesting that work was being done on the roof.[8] If testators of this parish responded to actual work being done, then the work of repair went on throughout the period, but from the concentration of bequests for the 'church work' between the mid-1520s and the late 1530s, it seems that these years were ones of high

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6. CRO, A7 (a), f 1.

7. Reader, c7, f 83. Architectural evidence of building work on St. Michael's has been found by N. Pevsner and Alexandra Wedgewood, The Buildings of England, Warwickshire, (1966), 250 - 51.

8. PCC, 30 Milles; 15 Bennett.

activity.[9] Unfortunately, the churchwardens' accounts for Holy Trinity have also not survived for this period and so the nature of the work being carried out remains unknown.

Church-building is a strong indication of support for the Church, though testamentary bequests alone did not fund such work. They were merely additional sums, no doubt welcome, but insufficient on their own. The question remains, therefore, who did pay for the work? The answer is, of course, the parishioners of St. Michael's and Holy Trinity during their lives. There is no evidence of this, but it is not wrong to assume that at Coventry, as elsewhere, parishioners were donating money, materials and their time free of charge, to carry out the work. Also, fund raising ventures would have been organised, such as churchales, to raise yet more money. Those who claim that there was disenchantment with the late medieval Church before the Reformation have to explain this enthusiasm for church-building. Bequests found in wills might well be criticised on the grounds that a pious will does not necessarily indicate a pious life, but if people were supporting the repair of their parish churches and undertook new construction work during their lifetimes, then it is difficult to see how such a charge can be maintained.

Other sources indicate that there was a good deal of building work being carried out on other churches in the city in the early decades of the sixteenth century. The accounts of Corpus Christi Guild reveal that in 1501-2 £3 13s.2d. was spent on repairs to the

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9. See Appendix, Table 17; Pevsner and Wedgewood, op. cit., 259, found evidence of work on Holy Trinity as late as 1535-40. The evidence of the wills and architectural evidence is mutually supportive, therefore, and shows that work was still being done on this church until the last decade or so of Henry VIII's reign.

guild's church of St. Nicholas, followed by a further £5 in 1507-8 on a 'new butress on the west end of St. Nicholas church on the north cornett'. The guild also carried out extensive repair and alteration work on its guild hall, also dedicated to St. Nicholas, at the same time. In 1500-1 £18 14s.6d. was spent on 'makynge of a new yete & A wall at Seynt Nycholas hall of ston & bryke'. A further £16 10s.3d. was spent on major alterations in 1509-10; £5 6s.10d. on the 'makynge of a wendow at the hy dyes of Seynt Nycholas hall on the west Syd'; 17s.2d. on the 'makynge of a gappe wendow next to the sayd wendow'; £7 11s.11d. on the 'wendow that was cast out the cupbord'; 18s.2d. on 'the celyng of the same bay ther the cupbord stonds' and 36s.2d. on 'the peyntyng & making grene of the ii bays of the hall next the cupbord & for the clothe & peyntyng of the hyngyng that hangs at the hy deys next the seyd cupbord'.[10] The loss of the Trinity Guild accounts prevents us from knowing if this guild was also carrying out repairs or undertaking any new buildings at this time on its church at Bablake and guild hall of St. Mary.

The wills also show that the citizens of Coventry contributed to church-building elsewhere. There are several bequests to churches for repairs some distance from Coventry, such as the 10s. given by Richard Foxall in 1511 to St. Leonard's church in Bridgnorth. Foxall also made bequests for other purposes to the church of Mary Magdelene of the same place and to Claverley church some four miles to the east, where he had been born. The same reason seems to have prompted John

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10. CRO, A6, ff 121, 160, 106, 171; C. R. Morris, Cathedrals and Abbeys of England and Wales. The Building Church 600-1540. (1979), 225-27, points out that there was a good deal of building undertaken on churches by the parishes and guilds in the late medieval period compared to that which was going on at cathedral level.

Padlond to give 10s. to Pontesbury church, Shropshire, for repairs in 1516. He also made other bequests to the church and parish and to the religious houses in Shrewsbury, some five mile to the north-east. Not all bequests were for general repairs. Some were for specific work being done, such as the 40s. bequeathed by Richard Cooke in 1507 'to the making of a newe Chapell of Saint John the Baptiste within the parisshe Churche of Walsall'. Some sixteen years later in 1523 his son William gave an additional 20s. towards the same work. There are also bequests to churches nearer to Coventry, such as the 5s. given to Exhall church, in the county of the City of Coventry by Thomas Saunders in 1511. He also gave another 5s. to the repair of Bedford church, Northamptonshire. In 1516 Humphrey Grene gave 20d each to the churches of Allesley and Corley a few miles to the north-west of the city. Work was also being done on Ryton church steeple, some five miles to the south-east of the city. In 1512 Thomas Churchman bequeathed 20s. for its repair, and the above-mentioned William Cooke bequeathed 20s. to the 'building' of the same steeple.[11]

The copious flow of gifts and money into the parish churches begins to decline from the late 1520s and early 1530s. From this time until the end of Henry VIII's reign there is a noticeable decline in the value and the number of bequests. Gone are the multiple bequests which were a feature of the earlier period. Testators continue to make bequests to the high altars and the Jesus altars, but there are few to the other side altars. Bequests for repairs and for new building all but cease. This decline was not due to

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11. PCC, 31 Fetiplace; 15 Holder; 29 Adeane; 7 Bodfelde; 1 Fetiplace; 22 Holder; 15 Fetiplace.

any growing disenchantment with the Church, however, for bequests continued to be made: if the citizens had been disenchanted they would have ceased making such bequests altogether. The reason for the decline in the value and number of bequests is the sharp decline in Coventry's economic fortunes during these years. The two events are interrelated, and care should be taken not to confuse the consequences of economic decline and the resulting poverty with any disenchantment with the Church. As we shall see, there is a decline in the value and number across the whole range of religious bequests.[12]

Another factor which affects the pattern of bequests from the late 1520s and early 1530s is the increase in the number of wills belonging to quite humble people. With very few exceptions, until this time the surviving Coventry wills were proved in the prerogative court of Canterbury, which handled the wills of the wealthier sort. Thereafter, wills survive in increasing numbers which were proved in the diocesan and archdeaconry courts, which handled wills belonging to the poorer sort.[13] Not all these wills belonged to the less wealthy, however, for more and more wills were being proved locally anyway. However, looking at the individual testators it is clear that wills now survive which belong to relatively poor people. The wills from this time until the end of the period are therefore representative of a larger section of the community at Coventry than before, which is reflected in the greater disparity in wealth between testators.

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12. The decline in the number and value of bequests is clear from the tables in the Appendix. One of the tables which best illustrates the decline in the value of bequests is Table 8: Bequests to the Jesus altar in St. Michael's.

13. See Appendix, Table 1.

The range of testators' wealth can be illustrated by looking at the surviving wills for a particular year, in this case 1543, although any year in the period from the early 1530s would do equally well. There are eight surviving wills. William Turner of Holy Trinity parish, whose occupation is not given in his will, made no religious bequests in the body of his will at all, and nothing more is known about him. William Stevenson of St. Michael's parish, a baker, bequeathed 4d to the Jesus altar in this church. Like Turner, nothing else is known about him. The will of Richard Brecknock of Holy Trinity parish does not give his occupation, but he was evidently a master of his craft, for he bequeathed 'my masters gowne' to his son Roger. He bequeathed 8d. to the high altar of Holy Trinity and 4d. to Our Lady's altar in the same church. John Lawton, a capper of St. Michael's parish, was a prominent figure in Gosford Street ward where he lived. Twice, in 1538 and 1541, he was chosen as representative of his ward to select common lands of the city that were to be enclosed. In 1535 he was elected warden of the city. He sat on the city council only once, in 1540. He bequeathed 6d. to the Jesus altar in St. Michael's and 6d. to St. Nicholas' altar in the Cappers chapel in the same church. John Smyth, a draper of St. Michael's parish, made bequests of 2s. to the high altar and to the altars of Jesus and Our Lady in St. Michael's. John Crampe, a baker of St. Michael's parish, sheriff in 1519, bailiff the following year and from this time until 1539 a member of the city council bequeathed 8d. to the Jesus altar in St. Michael's. Thomas Banwell, a draper of Holy Trinity parish, chamberlain 1513, sheriff 1515 and mayor in 1524, made several bequests to this church. He gave 5s. to Our Lady's chapel and 12d. to every other. Robert Kirvyn, fishmonger, chamberlain 1524, sheriff 1528 and mayor in 1535, also made bequests to several

altars in his parish church of Holy Trinity, including 6d. to the altars of Jesus and Corpus Christi and 4d. to every other one. Of these eight individuals, only the last two had their wills proved in the prerogative court of Canterbury. All others were proved locally.[14]

Bequests to the religious houses in Coventry also appear to have been consistent from 1485 until their dissolution in late 1538 and early 1539. Approximately one in five testators made bequests to the friaries, usually both houses at the same time, while slightly fewer, about one in six, made bequests to the Charterhouse. But bequests to the priory were almost non-existent. There were bequests to the cathedral as the 'mother church' of the diocese, and to Lichfield cathedral as the other 'mother church' of the traditional fewpence for the repair of the fabric, but general bequests to the house were extremely few. It might appear that the priory did not attract the devotion of the citizens, but this does not seem to have been the case.

So far we have looked at only a small part of the available evidence, and since we are seeking to establish the attitudes of citizens to the religious houses, and particularly the priory, the following must also be taken into consideration: requests to be buried in their churches, requests for additional funeral services, bequests for masses and prayers and the appointment of the friars and monks as executors and overseers. In most cases evidence of the foregoing

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14. LJRO, Turner, William, 16/10/53; Stevenson, William, 23/9/43; Brecknock, Richard, 16/10/43; Lawton, John, 27/4/47, LB. 736, 760, 721, 742; LJRO, Smyth, John, 23/3/44; Crampe, John, 6/3/43, LB, 666, 667, 676; PCC, 19 Spert, LB, 637, 645, 686; PCC, 9 Dyngley, LB, 686, 694, 721.

will be found in the Appendix, but here we will look at references to the monks of the priory. Those who requested burial in the minster included Henry Boteler in 1489 recorder of Coventry between 1455 and his death, John Hutton, gentleman, in 1501, who also made the then prior, William Pollesworth, supervisor of his will, William Wall, scrivener, in 1533, and in 1537 Richard Peete, servingman, (perhaps in the priory itself,) and Simon Barkby, whose occupation is not given. Those who requested the monks to perform additional funeral services included William Hudson in 1484, a prominent figure in Spon Street ward, who also entrusted the monks with the performance of an anniversary obit, and Thomas Brademeadowe in 1493, a draper, mayor in 1463 and master of Trinity Guild twice, in 1466 and 1484, who also bequeathed money to the house for two trentals. Some testators made bequests to the priory 'to be prayed for as a brother' of the house. These included Thomas Bond the elder in 1506, a draper and mayor in 1498, John Haddon in 1518, also a wealthy draper, mayor in 1500, and Piers Warton in 1525.[15]

Another indication that the priory was supported by the citizens is found in the money it borrowed from them. The wealthy citizens of Coventry were lending the monks large sums of money in the sixteenth century. The Musters certificates of 1522 give the priory's debts as £188, of which £108 was owed to three citizens of Coventry: Ralph Swillington, recorder of Coventry, was owed £20, Julian Nethermyll, a wealthy draper and a member of the city council, was owed £60 and

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15. PCC, 30 Milles, LB, 283, 537; PCC, 28 Holgrave; LJRO, Wall William, 13/12/33; Peete, Richard, 6/4/38. SBT/GHC, DR 10/34, LB, 483; PCC, 8 VOX, LB, 320, 333, 518; PCC, 22 Adeane, LB, 588; 17 Ayloffe, LB, 599; PCC, 37 Bodfelde.

Richard Marler, a grocer and 'one of the three or four richest merchants in provincial England',[16] who had been mayor in 1509 was owed £28. And the priory was also lent money by people from outside Coventry. The Musters certificates noted that £20 was owed to Thomas Butler of Princethorpe.[17] After the suppression of the priory its outstanding debts were taken over by the Crown. A book of payments by the treasurer of the Court of Augmentations for 1541-42 records that on 2 December 1541 Isabel Wade, the wife of Christopher Wade, a mercer and former mayor, received £100 from Augmentations in part payment of a debt of £112 10s. owed her late husband. The Augmentations accounts also list a part payment of £60 of a debt of £71 to Henry Audley.[18] The lack of bequests to the priory may reflect an awareness on the part of citizens that the house was adequately endowed with lands for its support and maintenance, although the same might be said of the Charterhouse, which still received a large number of bequests. The priory apparently did not attract the fervent support of the inhabitants of Coventry as the two friaries and the Charterhouse, but the lack of bequests does not necessarily indicate that citizens were hostile to the house. Similar patterns of bequests to the religious houses have been found in the York wills by D. M. Palliser.[19] Devotion to individual houses and even orders

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16. W. G. Hoskins, Provincial England: Essays in Social and Economic History, (1965), 73.

17. CRO, Access, 24 f 90.

18. LP, XVI, 745 (ff 44, 45)

19. D. M. Palliser, The Reformation in York 1534-1553 (Borthwick Papers, 40, 1971), 2-3; Tudor York (Oxford, 1979), 226-27.

naturally varied, and too much significance should not be attached to the apparent lack of material support for one or the other.

Bequests to the monasteries in the surrounding area or elsewhere were few. Only about one testator in twenty four made any bequest, but there is again evidence that some inhabitants of Coventry lent money to other monasteries. To prompt the repayment of his loan to Kenilworth abbey, in his will of 1519 Nicholas Burwey, a fishmonger, and mayor in 1518, bequeathed 10s. to the house 'so that they paye me the rest of my money', and for the same reason he gave 6s.8d. to Combe abbey, 'if they pay their debt or ells not'. By his will of 1539 Julian Nethermyll bequeathed 1000 marks to his son John 'In cloth detts and plate', among which debts were evidently some from the abbeys of Kenilworth and Stoneleigh, for on 13 February 1542 the court of Augmentations paid the debts of these houses to him, but as executor rather than benefactor of his father's will. Christopher Wade lent money to Kirkby monastery, Leicestershire. On 27 September 1527 indentures were drawn up between Wade and Alice Friesbie, widow of Richard Friesbie, also of Coventry, and Thomas Kirby, prior of the house, for the discharge of the house's debt to Wade and Richard Friesbie. The house covenanted to deliver to Wade and Alice Friesbie on the feasts of St. Michael and the Annunciation of Our Lady next 'oon quarter of Barley malt well & Seasonable made, And oon halff quarter of good and able whete', to pay £3 6s.8d. a year for the next two years in equal portions on the same feast days 'at the Aulter of Saint Kateryne within the parishe of Saint Mighell in the Citie of Coventre' and pay thereafter £3 a year for the natural life of Alice Friesbie in equal portions on the same feast days in the same chapel.[20]

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20. PCC, 27 Ayloffe, LB, 653; PCC, 6 Alenger, LP, XVIII, 1, 436 (f 73); PCC, 32 Dyngley; SBT/GHC, DR/10. See Appendix, Table 39.

The wills also show that like the work being done on the parish churches, extensive new-building was being carried out on the two friaries and the Charterhouse in the late fifteenth and first twenty or thirty years of the sixteenth centuries. For example, in 1493 Thomas Brademeadowe bequeathed 10s. to the Greyfriars 'to the Reparacon of ther churche'. Though his bequest was not much when compared to what some testators gave, it does establish that work was being done on the Greyfriars at this early date, and probably on the other houses about this time also. Other bequests for 'repairs' and 'new building' are found from the mid-1500s onwards. In 1506 Thomas Bond the elder bequeathed £10 to the Charterhouse 'to their bieldyng of their Wall'. He also gave £30 to the Greyfriars 'to the makyng of the body of the church from the Roode to the pulpitt as appereth by the old werks', which was in addition to the 'threscore pounds and moo' he states in his will he had already given to the house in his lifetime. To the Whitefriars he gave 20 marks 'toward the fynisshyng of their cloister', which he again points out was 'over that I have doon before'. Bond did not make these very generous bequests for nothing, however, but in return for masses and prayers for his soul. He instructed his executors to have the Greyfriars 'make up their Writtyng betwixt theym and me' and keep an obit for him on the Annunciation of the Virgin, while the Whitefriars were to keep an obit for him on the Assumption of the Virgin. Both obits were to be kept in perpetuity. In 1507 James Preston, vicar of St. Michael's gave the Greyfriars £3 6s.8d. towards repairs. In 1516 John Padlond gave £40 to the Whitefriars 'towarde the bylding of theyr cloister', which was evidently still being built, in return for daily masses for his soul 'at the aulter of the Southsyde in the body of the church'. In 1518 John Haddon

instructed his craft, the Drapers, to see 'that a ffrere saye dayly masse for me and my wife in seint Annes Chapell for ever in the seid ffreris as they be bounde for the Reparacon made by me in the said ffreris Church as it appereth by apaire of Indentures made bitwene me the said John Haddon and Warden and Convent of the said ffreris and the kepers of the ffelisship of drapers to see this doon'. In 1525 Henry Pysford bequeathed £6 13s.4d. to the Charterhouse 'towards the Reparacon and bieldyng of the churche'.[21]

Clearly the work being done on the two friaries and the Charterhouse was very extensive. Some idea of just how extensive was the work at the Greyfriars may be had from a document which is unique for a house of this order. A detailed survey was made of the church at the time of its surrender with a view to ascertaining how much lead there was on its roof. It is not so much the survey itself that interests us as the comments appended thereto, where it is stated, 'The hole churche ys newly covered all within thees 24 yeres'. This was undoubtedly accomplished by the gifts of the likes of those testators named above.[22] Perhaps some of their bequests even went to pay for the new roof. It is not known whether it was the friars and monks themselves or the citizens of Coventry who instigated the large building programme indicated by the above bequests, and this does not matter. It does not matter because in either case the citizens were prepared to contribute, and contribute very generously, both during their lives and after their deaths.

There is a little evidence that building work was being done on

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21. PCC, 8 Vox; 22 Adeane; 15 Holder; 17 Ayloffe; 37 Bodfelde.

22. A. R. Martin, Franciscan Architecture in England, (Manchester, 1937), 71.

the priory in the early years of the sixteenth century. A set of accounts, called 'Swillington's Accounts', for 1504 state that 10s.6d was paid 'for making a wall in the Priory towards the Sextries'.[23] The accounts are no longer extant, the above reference being taken from a collection of antiquarian papers, but the individual who kept them was almost certainly Ralph Swillington, recorder of Coventry from 1515 to 1525. If the accounts were private they suggest that Swillington was making a personal contribution to the work being done. The bishop's visitation in 1518 inquired about the house's state of repair and entered in the records Reparationes pro posse facit. which suggests the prior had told the visitors that he was having some difficulty in maintaining the house properly. Unfortunately, the subsequent visitations of 1521 and 1524 do not report on the condition of the structure.[24] It seems that something was done to improve the situation, however, for from the early 1520s bequests to the 'mother' churches of Coventry and Lichfield appear in the wills whereas before they are hardly to be found. It is possible that the clergy were themselves prompted to remind testators to make the traditional bequest of a few pence for repairs.[25]

Bequests to the religious houses decline from the early 1530s, but probably not because of any growing disenchantment with them. Between 1533 and 1537 there is almost a complete absence of wills belonging to the wealthy, who seem to have supported the religious

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23. Reader, c 7, f 53.

24. P. Heath, Bishop Geoffrey Blythe's Visitations c1515-1525 (ed.), (Collections for a History of Staffordshire, 4th Ser., vii, 1973), 15.

25. See Appendix, Table 33; Morris, op. cit., 179, Fig. 7, shows that some new building was undertaken on the cathedral churches and major religious houses from about 1520.

houses more than any other particular section of the community at Coventry: most of the individuals already cited were members of the ruling elite of the city such as mayors, aldermen, councillors etc. All the surviving wills proved between 1533 and 1537 were proved locally.[26] There were three individuals who did make bequests to the friaries in these years: Elizabeth Middleton, a widow, who gave 3s.4d. to each friary in 1533, seems to have been the wife of a wealthy smith who continued the business herself after her husband's death. There are references in her will to two shops which she owned in the city. The following year William Rose bequeathed 6s.8d. to each friary. From his desire to be buried at the 'stairs front' of St. Anne's chapel in Holy Trinity, it seems he was a dyer. Nothing more is known about him. The third individual was Thomas Heryng, who gave 3s.4d. to each of the friars in 1536. He was a member of the prominent Heryng family of Coventry, and was related to Richard Heryng, a grocer, who was mayor in 1527. His exact relationship to Richard is not known. Thomas Heryng held civic office intermittently in the decade between 1522 and 1532, when his name appears as a member of the city council. He was elected warden in 1527, but never rose to higher office.[27] If it was not for the lack of wills belonging to the wealthy, bequests to the religious houses would probably have been constant throughout this period.

There were fluctuations in the bequest patterns to religious houses in the last decade or so of their existence which require explanation. Bequests to the friaries continued until shortly before their surrender, the last one being made on 3 July 1538 by Agnes Ives.[28]

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26. See Appendix, Table I.
27. LJRO, Middleton, Elizabeth, 31/3/33; Heryng, Thomas, 8/3/36; Rose, William, 15/10/34.
28. LJRO, Ives, Agnes, 13/10/39.

LJ 673, 679 et seq, 693

Bequests to the Charterhouse are another matter entirely. There is a complete absence of bequests to this house, or requests for additional funeral services, in the surviving wills after 1530. This might indicate a lack of devotion to the house in this period, but if so it was something which occurred virtually over-night, since it was so abrupt. The absence of bequests from 1534 onwards could be explained by national events: the inhabitants of Coventry were well aware of the Royal Supremacy and could not have overlooked the fact that the Coventry Carthusians were, like the rest of their order, reluctant to swear to it.[29] They would have been watching to see if the Charterhouse at Coventry would continue: they would not have made bequests to a house under threat of dissolution. The house eventually took the oath, however, but no sooner had one crisis passed then another was upon it. The continuance of the Coventry Charterhouse was threatened by the 1536 Act of Suppression, its yearly net income being under two hundred pounds. The absence of bequests between this year and its surrender could be due to this. The house remained under threat of dissolution until mid-1537, when it secured a licence of continuance. For more than a year its fate remained undecided, therefore, and testators would not have made bequests to a house whose survival was in doubt. As for the lack of bequests between 1530 and 1534, this could simply be because no wills have survived containing any. There were other periods of several years when no bequests to the Charterhouse are found in the wills, and there is no reason to think that the absence of bequests in this period relates to the early stages of the Reformation. The lack of bequests might also have something to do with people being unable to afford to give at this time. No bequests were made to the priory after 1531, but owing to their infrequency anyway it is difficult to

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29. See below, 246-48.

see if this has any significance.

The 1536 Act of Supression probably did not have much effect upon the traditional pattern of giving to the religious houses in Coventry, except in the case of the Charterhouse, because it was couched in terms which suggested it was motivated by a desire for reform and not plunder. No one could forsee what was going to happen. This view would have been reinforced by the reprieve of about one fifth of all the houses affected by the Act. Nevertheless, at some time between 1536 and the suppressions of 1539-1540 the inhabitants of Coventry must have realised that the king was not desirous of reform but intended to dissolve them all regardless of their discipline. The date of the last bequest to the friaries in the city (3 July 1538) suggests that that realization came late.

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We have traced the attitudes of the citizens to the religious houses in Coventry up to the point at which they surrendered to the Crown. The impression gained is that the very wealthy citizens at least were generally well disposed towards them. What of the views of other sections of the community at Coventry? The wills are silent, as are the surviving sources generally, but there is an exception. If we step backwards to late 1532 we find a highly critical view of the priory preserved in a lengthy document which propounded a scheme to remedy the decay of the realm. It proposed that the lands belonging to urban monasteries should be used to support military establishments housed in the monasteries themselves, which were to continue, but under a much stricter discipline. The military forces were to provide a standing army for use in time of war and act as a police force in peacetime. Its head captain was also to be given powers to supervise local government. The author, a certain Humphrey

Reynolds, a member of a small group on the edge of the ruling elite and wealthy citizens of Coventry, and submitted by him to Henry VIII in the form of a supplication shortly after he had entered his service as a yeoman of the Crown. It was based upon Reynolds' experiences in Coventry, although he claimed that it could be applied to towns and cities throughout the realm, and central to it was the disendowment of the greater part of the lands belonging to the monasteries, in Coventry's case the priory. It represents an entirely different view of the priory from that seen so far, for Reynolds had, as he saw it, good reason to dislike the monks.[30] But though the scheme was presented as Reynolds' own it probably represented a consensus of the group as a whole.

Before looking at the scheme itself it is important to understand Reynolds' motivations at the time he submitted it. By entering the king's service he would have been exempted from undertaking civic office in Coventry. Royal service automatically excused a person from entering local office unless he wanted to. Reynolds wished to avoid civic office because it could be financially ruinous for him, or anyone who accepted it: offices were non-remunerative, yet there were many charges upon officers, which they had to meet out of their own pockets. Reynolds went to great lengths to make this point in is supplication. He explained 'I with other which come of the younger brether hauyng no ffee ne wages of no man ne no occupacion but that I haue commeth by my wiff & my frendes & if my wiff die I shuld loose part of my landes & then shuld be takyn into office of the Citie, shuld within ii or iii yere spend all that my frends have goten for me so that in my age I shuld have nothyng lefte'. He tried to avoid

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30. SP/1/141, ff 34-64.

civic office before entering the King's service, but had failed to do so. He related that 'when a man haith goten eny good to fynde his lyvyng for feire of office which be so chargeable, he sueth to an abbey for a Covent seall or ells goeth to farme in the Countrie'. Reynolds could not take this option, however, for, as it becomes evident, he could not afford to purchase the leases of priory lands. His inability to do so conditioned his attitude to the monks of the priory and to monasteries in general.[31]

Reynolds dwelled for some time on this matter in his supplication, and returned to it a number of times. His criticism was that monasteries in general 'wole promyse ther sealls bothe for ther farmes & ther offices to iii or iiii persones whereby they sett men at variaunce so that one man is glad to outbid another for malice whereby they reise a C mks. or C li. for the leas or seall of anything'. Later he launched a vituperative attack upon the monks of the cathedral priory for following this practice. He found it 'a mervoeleuse abusion in these men which come in dett & dec [l] are for ther seall as is aforeseid, men paseth but they have a greit advantage as they use it, for they woll make mennes to dyvers contrarie to charite where they shall make one man to gyve more than another so that they woll so enhance their sealls that the taker shall have small profite'. He claimed that he knew of instances in which the monks obtained ten times the real value of their leases and offices: 'I know thay have an hundred li. for the seall of tene li. ffee which [is] contrarie to all good conscience & to ther foundacon', and asked, 'howe shulde gentilmen younger brethern liff having nether land nor fee seying these gentilmen & merchants & other men of occupacon gyv such large

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31. ibid., fos. 58, 57.

fynes that they cane have nothyng without it be by your owne promocon or by your owne hand?' Moreover, he claimed that even if a person did obtain an office or a lease, 'before ther yeres be expired if they be eny profit therin if it be but 2d. a day ther wolbe a Knyght or a greit man redy to gyve a fyne to take it out of your servants hands'.[32]

Examples of the sort of men Reynolds referred to can be found listed in the Valor Ecclesiasticus, all of whom were drawn from the wealthy ruling classes in Coventry. For example, Baldwin Porter is listed as chief steward of the Charterhouse just outside the city and auditor of the monastery of Combe. He was the steward and town clerk of Coventry between 1524 and 1552, and in the official records of the city is termed 'generosus', and possessed estates in Solihull and Fletchamstead. There is Roger Wigston, a member of the prosperous mercantile family of Leicester and Coventry, recorder of Coventry from 1524 to 1541, who was steward of the nunnery of Henwood, and chief steward of Pinley nunnery, whose prioress, Margery Wigston, he was related to, though the exact relationship is not known. He also held a number of leases from various religious houses in and around the city. Not surprisingly, several of them were of lands belonging to the house of Pinley, but he also had an estate at Wolston, a few miles to the east of Coventry, where his house was the impropriated rectory of Wolston, which belonged to the Charterhouse. Then there was Thomas Gregory, who held the office of auditor of the monastery of Stoneleigh. He was coroner of the city between 1546 and 1574. Other examples include John Saunders, who was bailiff and collector of the Whitefriars in Coventry, and a regular member of the

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32. ibid., fos. 36, 46, 47, 48.

city council between 1530 and 1553, being appointed mayor in 1543. Guy Speke, who was bailiff of the cathedral priory's lands in Counden, was a prominent figure in the Cross Cheaping Ward of the city, and between 1540 and 1552 he was intermittently the mace bearer. He held leases of property belonging to the cathedral priory in both Counden and Stoke. One other individual who deserves special mention is a certain William Jenyns, who was general receiver of the priory in Coventry. Reynolds pointed out in his scheme that a person who wished to avoid civic office might purchase a licence from the King exempting him from serving, and this is precisely what Jenyns did. The licence was granted on 16 April 1530, exempting him from being made mayor, sheriff, etc., of the city of Coventry, or of any county, town and borough in England. Probably Jenyns evaded civic office for the same reasons as Reynolds did.[33]

Reynolds was the younger son of John Reynolds, a fuller, who was a prominent figure in Spon Street ward. John Reynolds was appointed a collector of his ward for money given by the city to Edward IV in 1481 for his war against Scotland, and was one of twenty five inhabitants of Spon Street ward who contributed to a later levy for the war. The following year he entered into a bond of £100 with three others that Lawrence Saunders would abide by the verdict of the mayor in his dispute with the city concerning the surcharging and enclosing of the common lands. The same year he was one of the ten representatives of Spon Street ward which agreed on the conditions by which the city would farm certain lands of the priory to the south

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33. Valor, 54, 55, LB, 650, 806; Valor, 79, 90, LB, 696, 764, C142/69/73; Valor, 68, R. Bearman, The Gregorys of Stivichall in the Sixteenth Century, Cov. and Warw. Hist. Pam., no.8 (1972), 11; Valor, 57, LB, 768; Valor, 52, 736, 789, 800; Valor, 52; LP IV, iii, 6363 (16).

of the city. In 1488 he was appointed warden, in 1492 he was one of the electors of the mayor and officers of the city and in 1500 he was elected bailiff. He never sat on the city council, however.[34]

Humphrey Reynolds came from a comparatively prosperous family, therefore, and started out, like his father, as a fuller. He joined Corpus Christi Guild in 1502, when his father paid for him, and in 1521 he was one of the city sergeants. By 1523 he was married to Joan, the daughter of Hugh Dawes, a draper living in the wealthy Earl Street ward. It has been suggested that he had pretensions to gentility and had probably given up his occupation in order to supervise his lands by this time. This would explain his strenuous efforts to obtain leases of priory lands, and his subsequent hostility to the monks when he found himself unable to afford them. Had he obtained any leases he could have left the city to live on his lands, thereby removing himself from the possibility of having to undertake civic office, which he must have been expecting to be called upon to do at any time. His name does not appear in the official corporation records between the early 1520s and his entering the king's service in 1532, however, which shows that he managed to avoid it, but by the early 1530s, the pressure on him to accept office must have become so great that he had to do something to ensure his continued exemption. His solution to the problem was to enter the king's service, which he did with the assistance of Sir Francis Bryan, who procured his admission as a yeoman of the Crown.[35]

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34. LB, 478, 483, 512, 514, 533, 542, 599 n.2. See also, Mary Dormer Harris, 'Lawrence Saunders, Citizen of Coventry', EHR. ix, (1894), 633-51.

35. CRO, A6, fos. 131 et seq; ibid., f 249, PCC, 29 Maynwaryng; CRO, Access, 263, f 8. C.V. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a City. Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages, (Cambridge, 1979), 259, SP/1/141, f 35.

Reynolds' position was not unique by any means. There were many others like him who could not afford the high prices demanded by ecclesiastical landlords for leases and offices. And the problem was not confined the ecclesiastical landlords, for their lay counterparts were also demanding increased prices about the time Reynolds submitted his scheme to the king. It has been recognised as a general phenomenon that entry fines increased from the late 1520s and early 1530s onwards, as have the effects which their increase had upon those in the same position as Reynolds and his friends.[36] In the particular case of the ecclesiastical landlords, the increase in entry fines undoubtedly led to criticism of the Church by the laity, as it did in Reynolds' case. In the extreme, the increase in entry fines may have led to some supporting the dissolution of the religious houses when it occurred a few years later.

As for the scheme itself, though it proposed a remedy for the

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36. The early commonwealth men spoke out against the increase in entry fines in the late 1520s and 1530s (W. R. D. Jones, The Tudor Commonwealth 1529 - 1559. (1970), 159 - 162). Some appreciated the problems of the group to which Reynolds belonged: 'the younger brethren'. Thomas Starkey wrote to Henry VIII in 1536 - 37 in response to reports that he intended to lease the lands of the dissolved monasteries 'to gret lordys & gentylmen of much possessyon's'. He urged the king to lease them to poorer persons especially the 'younger brethren': 'yf the fermys therof were leysyd by copyhold, & of a mean rent, to younger bretherne lyvyng in servyce unprofytabully, & to them wych be of lowar state & degre, they schold gretely helpe to set forward chrystyan cyvylyte & much increase the nombur of your pepull, specyally yf the ferme of the hole monasterys and demayns of the same were dyvyded in to sundry portyonys & dyverse holdys, & not leysyd to one to turne hyt un-to a graunge' (S.J. Heritage (ed.), England in the Reign of Henry the Eighth Pt 1. Starkey's Life and Letters. (EETS, early series, 32, 1878), lviii.)

decay of the whole realm, It was primarily concerned with the towns and cities. Reynolds claimed that their decay was 'for lack of the due furnyi[ture] of god by theme that be religiouse men And also of the observyng & Kepyng of the decrees & estatuts of your the king's lawes', and was based, it appears, entirely upon his appreciation of the problems of Coventry.[37] Reynolds proposed a remedy along commonwealth lines, and so it is not surprising that he should identify the causes of the situation as a lack of due religion and the observance of the law, for these were the two basic elements held by contemporary commonwealth thinkers as essential to the maintenance of a society's fabric.[38] His critique of the priory and monasteries in general does not seem to have sprung from a desire to see them completely swept away, however, which suggests that he was not hostile to the monastic ideal itself. Nowhere in his scheme did he call for the wholesale dissolution of the monasteries.

Reynolds begins his supplication with a criticism of the monasteries and 'Religiouse men', who owned 'as goodlie & profitable lands as be within the Realm And yet is ther fewe of theme that cane Keip theme self out of dett & not yet meynteyn ther houses, ther lands decay & noo good household Kept & ffew gentilmen meynteyned'. Reynolds points out, in an obvious reference to the dissolutions carried out by Wolsey, that 'ther ile lyvyng & conversacon was partelie the cause of the pullyng downe of Abbeys'. It seems that he was not altogether against the process of dissolution, but only where there was no chance of bringing about reform. The 'blake monks' are singled out for special attention, and in particular the

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37. SP/1/141, f 34.

38. Jones, <u>op. cit.</u>, 43, 71

monks of the priory in Coventry. Reynolds claimed that the Benedictine monks generally 'may dispend £40 & above & yet they have not ther ful nomber of theme', while the house in Coventry 'haith been of greatter possessions than it is noe, How be it they may yet dispende litle lack of a thousand pounds of yeirlie rents beside casualties And yet the bisshop haith above CCC li. of ther best lands ..... And ther is no good household Kept & veray fewe men meynteyned & ther houses goo downe & yet they owe litle lack of a thousand pounds ..... And few or none of theme do liff after ther perfeccon that they be bound unto'. Moreover,'ther is belonging to the seid house dyvers benefices as hospitalls Chauntries & other like which be contrarie used to the willes of the founders', though he does not say what he meant by this last remark. This was a comprehensive list of abuses, but there is no way of knowing how accurate Reynolds' description of the priory was because his view was coloured to a large extent by his personal experiences. Also, we should not forget who he was addressing or the circumstances in which he did so. His description cannot be dismissed as a complete fabrication, but it must be allowed that he exaggerated it.[39]

To remedy the abuses of the monks of the priory and all other monastries, Reynolds proposed the following: each house was to support twenty monks, who were 'to liff after ther religion & to have meit drynk & clothyng books paper parchment & Inke with all other thyngs necessarie for theme as barbors & launderers'. Besides their board and lodging, each monk was to have 6s.8d. a year, which was to be given away in deeds of charity. In the case of abbots and priors, they were to have 40s. and subpriors 20s. for the same purpose. Each

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39. SP/1/141, fos. 36, 38, 48.

of the former were to be 'a lorde still & to fare like a lorde', but was only 'to medle with his brethern & not with the Temporalities by to se god trulie served'. The monks were 'to study no thyng but onelie to serve god & to teche & preche the true gospell without dissimulation', which Reynolds thought 'a good lyvyng for a good man that is disposed to live vertuouslie'. Those who could not find it in themselves to live in this way were to be 'wedded out that herafter ther woll noon take the perfeccon upon theme but that they dutend to lif vertuouslie And not to be takyn into religion till they be priests & have discreccon'. Thus 'men shall se ther lyvyng so profitt that every man shall reioyce in them so that as it was in the begynnyng of ther foundacon every man will gyve that they maiy convenyatlie spare'.[40]

What Reynolds was proposing, therefore, was to re-invigorate the monasteries by imposing upon the monks a lifestyle which he believed they had followed in the beginning of their foundation; they were to devote themselves entirely and exclusively to the service of God. He was proposing a revival of what he considered to be the monastic ideal, which the monks had failed to maintain because they involved themselves in non-spiritual or worldly affairs of no concern to them. Reynolds was not proposing, and nowhere did he indicate that he was, the actual dissolution of the monasteries. He was undoubtedly disenchanted with them to some extent, but he did not repudiate monasticism, whatever criticisms he had to make of the monks.

The other reason for the decay of towns and cities was that the king's laws were not enforced, and Reynolds chose to pick on a particular effect stemming from this: economic decline. He was

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40. ibid., fos. 39 - 41.

convinced that there was 'great decay' in Coventry because 'the handie Craftemen be not sett on work as they have been in tymes past'. When the citizens had lived by the crafts of Clothemakyng Cappyng hatmakyng with other occupaconis', and there was little that was worn 'byt lightlie it was maid within your said citie'. However, 'now ther is litle maid ware or none but suche as cometh frome beyonde the ffee so that if your Comens wold work they cane not sell that they make'. As a result, there were many poor people and vagabonds in the city, 'moo then the riche be able to meynteyn'. As far as the vagabonds were concerned he thought it expedient 'to fynde a meanes how they myght be sett on worke' rather than to punish them, as certain acts provided. Reynolds claimed that the city was in such a parlous state because those who were in authority did nothing to try to improve the situation. While appreciating the effects of imports upon the city's cloth industry, he believed that those acts made to reform 'part of these maid wares' would go some way to improve the situation if they were put into effect, 'but no man taketh peyn therin'. Those in authority merely 'dryveth out' their time in office, causing as little trouble for themselves as possible and trying to court popularity. The result of this was that 'the comens care not what they doo for they know they shall not be punyshed'. The unemployed were often found engaged in 'unlawful games', such as 'dysyng, cardyng & bowlyng', from which 'meny inconvenyences riseth'. Lack of work caused men 'to sett at the ale house when they have goten a peny to spende it And ther they havyng little or nothyng to lose care not what Invencons they Imagyne'.[41]

Reynolds bemoaned the lack of substantial men in the city, and

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41. ibid., fos.63 - 56, 50.

claimed that it was because there were so few that there was a riot on Lammas Day (1 August) 1525, which accompanied the opening of the common lands this year. Enclosure was not new, but since 1522 half the common lands had been enclosed to grow corn. Lands usually available for common pasture during the six months from Llamas Day were closed to communal use until the harvest was over. In 1525 the annual Lammas Day ride of the city chamberlains to open the common lands degenerated into a riot. Gates and hedges were thrown down by citizens who accompanied the chamberlains and a particularly hated ditch was breached. In the city another angry crowd gathered at New Gate, from where the chamberlains left and re-entered the city, presumably to await their return. Here was also the then mayor, Nicholas Heynes, who took the side of the rioters, apparently being opposed to the enclosure of the common lands. Doubtless emboldened by the mayor's support, the rioters shut the New Gate against the chamberlains. A third group of rioters broke into the city treasury in St. Mary's Hall and seized the Common Box which contained the rents of the enclosed common lands. This remained in their hands for four days. The troubles continued for two weeks, until order was restored by the Marquis of Dorset with the assisstance of Sir Henry Willoughby, Sir Edward Ferrers and a large force of two thousand men. Heynes was deprived of office and sent to London for interrogation. Thirty seven rioters were imprisoned in Kenilworth and Warwick castles and a further seven in the Marshalsea in London.[42]

Reynolds was convinced that the riot would never have occurred if there had been sufficient 'lerned' and 'substantiall' men in Coventry.

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42. Phythian - Adams, op.cit., 254 - 56.

He laments the death of Ralph Swillington, recorder, who died in the spring of 1525. He had 'kept the people well in awe' so long as he lived, and might have been able to avert the riot had he still been alive a few months later. Fortunately there were four other men of comparable standing in the city who brought the situation under control. At the time of his writing, however, of the four, one was dead and two had left the city, so only one remained, 'in whom standeth the hole welthe of the Citie, who is bothe loved & dred for his humanitie & if ought come to hyme but good as every man is mortall they wold stand nether sett by meir nor Recorder nor one another'.[43] There can be little doubt that the individual referred to by Reynolds was Julian Nethermyll. Richard Marler, who died in 1527, is probably the individual referred to by Reynolds as being dead at the time of his writing. He was one of the most substantial citizens in Coventry at the time of the riot. The identities of the remaining two individuals are not known but they may have been Thomas White, mayor in 1522, who disappears from the official records after 1520, probably to Bristol, and John Bond, who seems to have left Coventry in 1532, dying as a gentleman in Lancashire in 1538.[44]

Reynolds' scheme to arrest and reverse the decay of towns and cities was extreme. The lands stripped from the monasteries were to be used to set up and maintain military establishments, which were to be housed in the monasteries themselves. The personnel were to comprise a head captain, who was also to be a justice of the peace, a petty captain, an attorney and controller, a steward, a receiver, a marshal, a physician and a total of twenty eight servants to attend

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43. SP/1/141, f 56.

44. Phythian - Adams, op.cit., 265 n 47, LR, 692 - 3, 711.

them, together with fifteen fully armed and 'harnessed' gentlemen, with the same numbers of grooms and pages. These people were to be backed up by a force of 'surgeons, armorors, bowyers flechers smythis barbors cooks bakers & brewers with other as shalbe thought necessarie'. Reynolds laid down detailed financial provisions for liveries and fees for all these offices, but they need not concern us here. It should be pointed out, however, that he estimated the annual cost of maintaining one of these establishments as one thousand pounds, which was conveniently the total income from the lands belonging to the cathedral priory. He was quick to point out, 'all of this shuld be doon with redie money without any other provision'. No doubt he intended this to commend his scheme to the King. If, however, it should happen that a thousand pounds was insufficient, then he suggested some ways in which the expenditure could be reduced. He pointed out that 'ther belongeth hosbonmen to the same as hev gresse & corne', which might be used to supply the military force with these things, and also appears to have advocated reducing the stipends of local priests in order to generate more cash.[45]

Such a scheme, had it ever been instituted, would have provided the Crown with a standing army of considerable size for national defence, and with a formidable peace time police force, but it was not this side to his scheme which Reynolds regarded as the most significant. He saw such establishments as a means of closely supervising urban government, in which the role of the head captain as a Justice of the Peace was crucial. The head captain was to fill the gap left by the likes of those learned and substantial men who had deserted the city, and support those left in authority. He was to 'sit in iugement or

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45. ibid., fos. 41 - 43, 46.

his deputie in all Courts Cessions & leets & in Inquesiciones by the Clerke of your Marketts next the meir so that ther may no poore man take no wrong ne no other wrongs to be doon', and by the advice of the King's Council 'set all such acts as be maid for your lawes to be trulie executed'. Even Reynolds glimpsed the sort of supervision this might lead to, when he said 'Some men woll thynk this agaynst ther liberties', though he denied that this would be the case. In order that people should see that there was no threat to their 'liberties', he laid it down that the captain and his council was not to enter the council house of any town or city 'except they be called and if they be desired then to come & gyve ther best councell for the wealth of the Citie to helpe to maynteyn your Justice'; while in general processions the captain was to go 'next the meir with the recorder', and his steward and attorney were to go with the councillors of the town or city. If these arrangements did not re-assure the doubters, Reynolds pointed out that, 'these men shalbe Citizens & townsmen & the good inhabitants of the same & not to be about to hurt their liberties but to meynteyn them to the best of ther powers'. The captain and others of the military establishments were to 'inhabite themselfs ther as ther ffee lyeth whether it be Citie good towne or the next towne to it so that ther cheif dwellyng be ther for though they have a good lyvyng for themselfs & ther men yet they moost have a house for ther wyffs & servants where other whiles they woll Keip house themself'. Thus, concluded Reynolds, there 'shalbe a great profit for theme for they beyng within the cite men wolbe glad to send to theme for councell', while the towns and cities 'shalbe glad to se ther houses sett & substantiall lerned men among theme'.[46]

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46. ibid., fos. 49 - 52.

It may have been naive of him to think that things would turn out as he planned if his scheme had been instituted, but he does not seem to have intended to sweep away the city's hard-won liberties. He appears to have envisaged the captain in the role of an independent arbitrator, who was to see that everyone was treated fairly and had a decent living. His greatest criticism of the existing system, illustrated by his preoccupation with the matter of leases and offices, was that 'every man standethe for his owne singler profit & fewe for the comens'. He thought that the purchase of leases and offices should be abolished and that every person who took a lease, instead of purchasing the same, should 'fynde men with horse & harnes wages for a monethe or ii after ther abilitie'. This was possible, of course, in his scheme of things, because the monastic lands would have been transferred to the military establishments, and the gift of the leases would have been in the hands of the captain and not the head of the monastery. But though Reynolds sought to make it possible for everyone to live decently, he was biased in favour of the lease holders. A decent living for all could be achieved, to his way of thinking, 'if every lord & great man wold liff on his lands & leff farmes & merchandise & every priste to liff upon his benefise every merchant & Craftesman to liff by ther occupaconis in Cities & good townes And lett the poore husbond to lyff by his husbandry then ye shuld have your realms to prospere'. This was an obvious reference to himself and others like him who were outbid for leases and offices by 'gentilmen & merchants & other men of occupation'. The situation was to be regulated by the captain and his council who were to 'care for nothyng but to se as nygh as they cane all thyngs sett in good order'.[47]

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47. ibid., fos. 61, 60, 62.

Given his criticisms of the city's government, it is hardly surprising that Reynolds' supplication caused quite a stir in Coventry, but much of what it said about city life at this time seems to be reliable. Other sources corroborate much of it, such as the strong financial disincentives to undertake civic office, the lack of respected figures in the community and a half-hearted enforcement of laws. The evidence for the latter is somewhat scanty, but does point in this direction.[48] Such criticisms could have been most damaging for the corporation. The latter's response was slow, however, and not until at least a month after Reynolds had submitted the scheme was anything done. On 3 January 1533 Roger Wigston, the recorder, wrote to Cromwell that he had learned of certain people, to the number of five or six, who had 'confederated' themselves against the priory there, the mayor and others, and had sent 'a bill of complaint' to the king, 'pretending the commonweal'. He begged Cromwell not to believe a word of it until he had heard the corporation's side of the story. Wigston identified Reynolds as the 'vaunt parlar and chefe chapteyn' of the group, and named another of the group as 'oon Foster A Sergeaunt of the Cite', but the identities of the others were unknown to him or the rest of the corporation. This, together with the fact that Cromwell did not receive the letter from Wigston until at least a month after Reynolds submitted his scheme, suggests that the corporation was unaware of the existence of the group in the city. How they learned of its existence or who informed them is not known, but their reaction was perhaps predictable. Wigston was sure that if the group was to find any favour 'in theyr said malicious myndes & ententes, yt is to be drad that right shortlye they wold bryng it [the city] to A more & doper daunger then it was at before', ie. in 1525.[49] The

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48. Phythian - Adams, op. cit., 262.

49. SP/1/74, f 16.

corporation feared a repetition of the events of seven years previously, which conditioned their responses to the slightest indication of popular dissatisfaction. In this case, however, they seem to have over-reacted. The group was clearly not very active: it was small in size, and the corporation, presumably after making inquiries of its own, had been able to identify only two of its members. All this does not indicate any widespread dissaffection with the priory and the city authorities, unless it was silent discontent. Beyond Wigston's letter nothing more is heard of the episode, which seems to have been forgotten after the initial furore.[50]

Subsequently, and ironically, Reynolds found himself undertaking civic office. His wife died in 1536, but he continued to avoid office for another ten years or so. In 1548 he was elected sheriff, without ever having served as a junior officer. Bailiff in 1549, from this time until his death in 1553 he was a member of the city council. He had been fortunate in the disposal of ex-religious lands to obtain leases which belonged to the priory and to Stoneleigh abbey. He was also granted for life the office of bailiff and collector of the rents and farms of the latter monastery.[51] Since

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50. Reynolds' ideas seem to have been absorbed into a later scheme of reform by Thomas Gibson, a London grocer who proposed a scheme to use surplus ecclesiastical wealth for the defence of the realm. Central to Gibson's scheme was the establishment of a Court of Centeners at Coventry, which was to administer the organisation of the army. The scheme is discussed by Lawrence Stone, 'The Political Programme of Thomas Cromwell', BIHR, XXIV (1951), 1 - 18.

51. Phythian-Adams, op. cit., 266, LB, 788, 790, W. B. Bickley, (ed.), Abstract of the Bailiffs' Accounts of Monastic and other Estates in the County of Warwick, (Dugdale Society, ii, 1923).

he had acquired the leases and offices he had earlier so strenuously sought, it is strange that he should have entered civic office, but by the late 1540s, with a change of circumstances largely as a result of the dissolution of the monasteries, he was better able to undertake office and benefit from the prestige and influence which it conferred upon him. With his financial position improved, to enter into civic office was the natural course for him to take.

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Many of the religious bequests found in the wills between 1485 and 1547 were concerned with providing intercession for the souls of the testators. Wills were made in anticipation of death when an individual was preoccupied with his or her subsequent salvation. Those not bad enough for Hell nor good enough for Heaven went to the intermediate place of Purgatory. For the average man some time in this place must have been expected, but the length of the sentence depended upon the amount of intercession offered up to God on his behalf by the living. He had no idea how long his soul might remain in Purgatory, however, for God alone knew the extent of his unexpiated guilt and therefore the length of the sentence. It was up to the individual to provide as much intercession as he or she could afford in order to ensure that the sentence was as short as possible.

For the rich the ultimate private intercessory institution was a college, an endowment for the maintenance of several priests to celebrate masses daily for the soul of the founder and anyone else named by him or her. Such an endowment was expensive, however, because it had to be supported with sufficient lands to pay the stipends of the priests. More common was the endowment of a single chantry priest to celebrate masses daily for the soul of the founder. A priest might also be endowed for a finite number of years to celebrate masses daily. These stipendiary priests could be hired for

any length of time, even in perpetuity, in which case they differed little from the chantry priests mentioned above. There was an important difference, however, for stipendiary priests could be hired and fired at will, while chantry priests were beneficed priests and therefore had greater security of tenure. For those unable to afford daily masses in perpetuity or for a lengthy period of time a much less expensive way of securing regular intercession was to provide for an obit, when, on the anniversary of the death of the founder, or any day stipulated by him, the funeral services of placebo, dirge and requiem mass would be repeated. Obits might also be endowed for any length of time though usually in perpetuity, and again required property to support them. If this was still too expensive, a person might request a trental, a set of thirty requiem masses, celebrated on one day or on thirty different days. An elaboration upon the ordinary trental was a trental of St. Gregory, when three masses were celebrated on ten different feast days of the Church throughout the year.[52] For those who could not afford to support priests to say masses for themselves they might make bequests to what are often called 'services', which were effectively chantries which anyone might endow and which were usually served by a stipendiary priest hired to say mass for the founders. Those who could not afford even this might increase the number of masses said for their soul by providing for additional funeral services. Each person could expect to receive the funeral services of placebo, dirge and requiem mass

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52. The ten feast days were Christmas Day, Epiphany, the Purification of the Virgin, the Annunciation of the Virgin, Easter Sunday, Ascension Day, Whit-Sunday, Trinity Sunday, the Assumption of the Virgin and the Nativity of the Virgin. C. W. Foster (ed.), Lincoln Wills. (Lincoln Record Society, 5, 1914), 247.

celebrated with a certain number of priests, clerks and children, according to his degree, which would be repeated at their Month's mind. Testators could provide for additional funeral services, thus increasing the number of masses said for their soul at the time of their burial.

As well as providing masses for the health of the soul, there were numerous other ways of securing intercession. Testators could make bequests to maintain the lights which burned before the altars and images dedicated to Mary and the saints, to have his soul in remembrance by the saint who might then intercede on his behalf with God. There were bead rolls to which testators could have their names added to be remembered and prayed for from the pulpits of their parish churches on Sundays. Many testators made charitable bequests, comprising mainly bequests to the poor, but also including some to poor maidens, education and the repair of highways and bridges. These were bound up with the Church's doctrine of 'good works'. The prayers of the poor were thought to be particularly efficacious, and there can be little doubt that hope of prayers was the motivation behind such bequests. Increasing the volume of masses said at burial was only a part of the many additions which could be made to basic funeral arrangements. It was possible to have additional peels of bells, tapers and torches, doles to the poor who attended and food and drink for others, usually friends and neighbours, who attended. A large attendance of mourners greatly increased the prayers offered up for the soul of the deceased. Some testators made bequests to monasteries to be prayed for 'as a brother of the house' or to made 'a brother of the chapter'. Prayers might be secured in return for a small consideration to just about anybody. For a few pence or shillings a person could have his friends, his servants, apprentices or anyone else remember him in their prayers. In fact there was

scarcely a limit to the way in which testators could provide intercession for their souls, and some of the ways in which they did so could be unusual.

The Coventry wills between 1485 and 1547 reveal an intense preoccupation with bequests which directly or indirectly resulted in masses and prayers for the soul, a preoccupation which is particularly marked in the period between 1485 and the late 1520s and early 1530s. During this period testators were lavishing enormous amounts of money on providing for the health of their souls. The ways in which they might do so have been set out above, but in this period testators were frequently making several and sometimes many bequests which resulted in masses and prayers for their souls. Intense, long-term intercession was the most desirable, but it was also the most expensive. Most testators provided for a short period of intense intercession immediately after death, coupled with some longer-term though less intense intercession. There might also be a number of smaller bequests which resulted in prayers for their souls and sometimes masses. The permutations and combinations were endless.

Thomas Brademedowe, who made his will in 1493, made extensive and multiple provisions for the health of his soul in his will and other documents.[53] He provided for a trental of masses to be celebrated by the priests of St. Michael's and two trentals to be celebrated by each of the following: the monks of the priory and the Charterhouse, the friars of both houses in the city and the priests of St. John's hospital. The latter were also to provide additional funeral services (dirge and requiem mass) for him on the day of his

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53. PCC, 8 Vox; SBT/GHC, DR/10/397.

burial. He also provided for a yearly obit in perpetuity to be kept in St. Michael's worth 20s.4d. a year, another worth 6s.8d. in perpetuity in the church of Sutton Coldfield, where he was born, and a stipendiary priest in perpetuity to celebrate masses daily for his soul in the same church. A clerk of the Greyfriars in Coventry was to preach a sermon each year on All Souls Day 'for all Christian soules & in especiall for the soule of me the seid Thomas Brademedowe'. He directed that various lights in St. Michael's, Sutton Coldfield church and others in the immediate area of Coventry were to be maintained at his expense. In Sutton Coldfield church the lights before the images of 'our blest lady in Childbed' and 'our lady pyte' were to be maintained yearly forever. Moreover on Good Friday each year twelve torches, each weighing 9lbs, were to be made and delivered one each to the nine principal altars in St. Michael's, and the churches of Sutton Coldfield, Stoke and Stivichall 'that they shall dayly brenne [burn] At the Sacryng of every masse to be doon & had At every of the seid Auters'. To pay for all this, Brademedowe gave lands to the clear yearly value of £13 8s.5d.

Thomas Bond the elder made his will in 1506.[54] He requested a trental of masses be celebrated on the day of his death, and bequeathed 6s.8d. to every church within six miles of Coventry towards their repair in return for a dirge and requiem mass on the day of his burial. He also gave 6s.8d. to St. John's hospital for the same and to be prayed for 'as a brother'. Bond gave 20s. each to twelve Midland monasteries for this latter purpose: Coventry, Kenilworth, Combe, Stoneleigh, Makstoke, Arbury, Leicester, Bordelley, Gloucester, Evesham, Hailes and Tewkesbury. Long term intercession was provided for in several ways: his generous bequests towards the building of the two friary churches in Coventry during his life and by his will

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54. PCC, 22 Adeane.

has already been mentioned, in return for which each house covenanted to keep a perpetual obit for his soul. Bond also founded a perpetual chantry, but not of the usual sort: his took the form of an almhouse.

There are a great many apparently non-religious or 'secular' bequests found in wills, especially those to do with charity, which often turn out to have been motivated by the strongest of religious reasons. Almshouses are a case in point. To describe Bond's foundation as an almshouse is to apply to it a term Bond never used himself. He always referred to it as a 'beadhouse', that is a prayer-house, and this best conveys its primary purpose. It was a form of perpetual chantry in which the inmates of the house were required to pray for his soul and the souls of those appointed by him. He had merely substituted a number of poor people for a priest as the prayer-force.

The beadhouse was to be dedicated 'to thonor of the Blessed Trynitie', for ten poor men, and one woman, to prepare their food and drink, who were to be chosen from among the brethren of the Trinity Guild in Coventry. They were to be chosen on a 'general day' of the guild from among those members who had paid all of their fines, failing which they were to be chosen from among the brethren of the Corpus Christi Guild who had paid all of their fines, and failing this they were to be chosen from among those poor brethren who had paid their fines 'part lesse or more'. Every poor man admitted to the beadhouse, and the woman also, were to have a black gown and hood each year, 'with a conysaunt of the Trynitie before and behinde', and their lives were to be dedicated to the welfare of the brethren and sisters of Trinity Guild in this world and their souls in the next. In pursuance of this a strict regimen was imposed on the poor men. They

were to have 'noon other fare nore dyett but oonly white mete three dayes in the weke that is to say Wednysday ffriday and Saturday And thies three daies to be fastid with oon meyle for the good prosperite of all the brethren and sistern of the said Trynitie gilde And for the soules that be departid'. Moreover, every day the poor men were to be 'at the begynnyng of Matyns masse and evensong and ther to contynue to thende of the said service'. They were excused only if they were sick. Also, every day they were bound to say 'three tymes our ladyes psalter for all the brethren and sistern of the seid Trynitie gilde without lawful Impedyment And att every dirige that they shalbe Kneylyng every man to say xv Paternosters and xv Aveys and three Credys in the worship of the passion of Jhesucrist', after which they were to drink and go to bed. In addition, the poor men were to go in processions on general days of the guild, unless prevented from doing so by illness.

Bond also provided for 'A devout secular preest doctor of divinitie or bachelar of dyvinitie or a Maister of arts at the leest', who was to celebrate mass once a week on Sundays in the chapel built within the beadhouse for this purpose. The priest was to be a member of both religious guilds, and be present at their every general day, 'to give his best advise and counsaill' and also to read out Bond's will, in particular 'the poynts and articlys that shalbe first made that belongen to the said bedehouse And that the said x poore men may knowen whether they be performed and doon according to the will'. Of course this provided the opportunity for Bond to continually remind the guilds of his benefaction. The priest was only excused attendance at general days if he was ill, but he was to make sure that he attended at least one general day a year.

All Bond's lands had been enfeoffed to use, and he instructed his feoffees for the time being to put them 'In feoffees hands or otherwise as can be best and moost suryst wey taken by counsaill of good lernyd men for the best surety and contynewance of the same', adding that if the lands could not be assured by feoffment, then his feoffees were to 'moreys [mortise] hit', that is obtain a licence of mortmain. Accordingly, a licence was obtained, dated 3 March 1508, which vested the lands in Trinity Guild. The guild was to receive lands to the yearly value of £50 to support a chaplain to perform 'sacred services, prayers and obsequies', and for up to twelve poor men, not ten as in Bond's will, to offer prayers for the king's health so long as he should live and for his soul after death, for the good estate of the brethren and sisters of the Trinity Guild while they lived and for their souls after death, but especially for the soul of Thomas Bond. For some reason which is nowhere stated, Trinity Guild refused to take possession of the lands, and the maintenance of the beadhouse fell to Bond's descendants, who maintained it as a private concern.

Another almshouse was founded by William Ford, an exact contemporary of Bond's. A merchant of the Staple of Calais, he was made warden in 1485, the year prior to Bond's election to the same office, and bailiff from April 1492, while Bond was elected sheriff in October the same year. Ford was made mayor in 1497, and his mayoralty was followed by that of Bond's.[55] The friendship of the two men is attested by Ford's appointment as one of the executors of Bond's will. And as their lives had coincided so almost did their

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55. LB, 522, 528, 543, 544, 582, 588

deaths, for Ford died the year after Bond in 1507.[56] Their very close association may explain why they both selected the poor as the prayer forces for their chantries, though if this was the case it was a matter of Bond following Ford's lead, because the latter seems to have built his almshouse during his lifetime, sometime before 1492. In this year George Ruyton bequeathed a cloak to Agnes Bowyer, who is described as 'elimosinam de domo in vico fratrum minorum', which was the street where Ford's almshouse, or the Greyfriars hospital as it was also known, was situated.[57]

There is some question as to whether or not Ford considered his almshouse as a beadhouse. The question arises largely because of the brief mention Ford made of it in his will. He merely stated, 'It is my will to have an almys house beside the grey frers gate within Coventre for v men and oon Woman And they to have eche of theym 5d. a pece weekly, for this liffloode to be purchased by the discrecion of myn executours'. Since Ford had already built the almshouse, there was little reason for him to go into detail about it in his will. He did look upon the poor as 'beadfolk', however, as his will goes to show. He made the following bequest: 'I will that thee vi houses that bee upon the Sponecawsey now in the mercers hands be taken for xii yeres or more And in them to be vi bedefolke eche of theym to have A newe bedde that is to say A materas ii blanketts ii peyre shets A Keverlet and a Keverlet of Rags and to eche of theym 5d a Wooke in money'. Since he saw the poor people in his houses on the Spon causeway as 'prayerfolk', it is likely that he looked upon the inmates

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56. PCC, 35 Adeane.

57. PCC, 12 Vox.

of his almshouse in the same way.

In any event, Ford's foundation was subsequently altered into what was unmistakably a chantry some ten years later by his executors. They were his wife Agnes, his father-in-law William Pysford the elder and Richard Prat, priest, to whom Ford gave powers 'to alter to adde or mynyshe' his will. The establishment of the almshouse seems to have fallen largely to Ford's father-in-law, however, who purchased lands to the yearly value of £9 6s. to endow it.[58] For ten years it was maintained according to Ford's wishes, but when Pysford made his own will in 1517 he made alterations to the almshouse.[59] The capacity was increased to six poor men and their wives, and additional endowment lands worth £4 were purchased, presumably to support the additional numbers. By his will, however, Pysford founded a perpetual chantry in St. Michael's, which became inextricably mixed up with Ford's foundation.

William Pysford was a grocer and Merchant of the Staple of Calais, a member of the large mercantile family of Coventry and Leicester, and mayor of Coventry in 1501. By his will of 1517 he instructed his executors to obtain lands to the value of 20 marks (£13 6s.8d.), which were to endow a priest to sing and say masses daily in St. Michael's in the Mercers' chapel for his soul, the souls of his three wives, the souls of William Ford and his two wives and the brethren and sisters of Trinity Guild. Pysford provided that the overplus of the money from the lands was to be given to this guild, which was to see that an obit was kept in perpetuity for Pysford and his wife from the

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58. PCC, 9 Ayloffe.

59. loc. cit.

day of his death. The chantry priest was to have a chamber in Ford's almshouse and a 'libertie' in the chapel which had been built in the same. Here he was to celebrate mass once or twice a week - or more often if necessary - for those poor in the almshouse too sick or feeble to attend church, in order 'that they may the more devoutly serve god and praye for the soyles of their founders'. As a result of Pysford's will the chantry and the almshouse almost became parts of the same foundation. The Henrician chantry commissioners lumped them together under 'Pysford's Chantry', giving its value as £26 9s. The Edwardian chantry commissioners succeeded in separating the one from the other and recorded the value of both. The chantry was worth £13 6s.8d., while the almshouse, whose endowment lands had been increased by Pysford, were stated to be £12 13s.4d. This was not correct, since the total value of the endowment lands was £13 9s., but the commissioners did state they had decayed.[60]

Besides setting up the chantry, Pysford made the following provision for the health of his soul. With his son Henry he gave money to have a chapel, called the Rood chapel, built adjoining the Greyfriars church in Coventry. The City Annals for 1520 state 'This year was the Rode at the Greyfriars, and the new Chapell made first in the Churchyard'.[61] William Pysford the elder never saw it completed, therefore. Henry Pysford did, however, and by his will of 1525 requested burial in the chapel. Some seven years after his death, in 1532, indentures were drawn up between the executors of Henry Pysford and the master, warden and convent of the Greyfriars, which stated that William Pysford the elder and his son Henry had given 400

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60. E 301/31, f 6; E 301/53, f 1.

61. City Annals, F. Bliss Burbidge, Old Coventry and Lady Godiva: Being Some Flowers of Coventry History. (Birmingham, n.d.), 225.

marks (£266 13s.4d.) and upwards during their lifetimes towards the building of a chapel in the churchyard of the friary called the Rood chapel, as well as having done many other charitable deeds for the house. In consideration of their benevolence, the friars covenanted to say mass daily in the chapel or in the church of the Greyfriars for the souls of William Pysford the elder, his two sons William and Henry and other named persons. An obit was also to be celebrated about 15 May, and detailed provisions regarding the saying of mass on this occasion were included in the indentures, including the ringing of a bell beforehand 'to stir the people to come to it'. Upon execution of this covenant Henry Pysford's executors gave £10 for ornaments for the church.[62] The enormous amount of money given by William Pysford the elder for the health of his soul is easy to see, therefore: he had provided for, or contributed to, two perpetual chantries served by priests and a third whose prayer force was twelve poor men and their wives.

The Rood chapel was the second foundation of this type founded in the Greyfriars church in the early sixteenth century for which records have survived. The first was established by the Smyth family. In 1501 John Smyth of Coventry, gentleman, directed that his body was to be buried in the Greyfriars church by his wife Joan, 'according to suche covenants as ben specified in A peyre of Indentures not yet sealed Wherof the oon parte of them is in my stody at London and the other parte remayneth with the marbeler in Poules [St. Paul's, London?] churche yarde'. Amongst other things these indentures provided that 'A lyke tombe of marbull be made and sett in the wall ther as my wif lyeth lyke to A tombe in the Greyfriars of London made and sett for

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62. A. R. Martin, op. cit., 66.

William Maryner and his wiff with lyke Scripture and ymagery as ther is in everything'.[63] It seems that the indentures were eventually sealed and Smyth was buried according to his wishes, for when his son Henry made his will in 1512 he requested burial in the Greyfriars church before the high altar there 'or at thende of the Tombe where my good ffather and mother with other my ffrendes lye'.[64]

Henry Smyth, who lived in the parish of Burton Hastings, Warwickshire, by the time he made his will, left instructions for a chapel to be built about the altar before which his father and mother were buried. Moreover, he stated he had sought 'a perdonne [i.e. an indulgence] from Rome for the honour of Allmighty god and saint ffrancis and to assiste and socour the poor house of the Greyfriars of Coventre'. Assuming that the 'pardon' was obtained, a'table' was to be hung in the chapel rehersing the privilege of the pardon, and the profits derived from the latter were to go towards the 'Relevyng repairing and buylding' of the house. In return, the warden and convent of the house were to covenant with Smyth's executors, probably in much the same way as they did with those of Henry Pysford's, to find a friar to sing mass at eleven o'clock each day for his soul, his wife's soul, the souls of his father and mother and those of Walter Gaunt and his wife and John Spencer. Since the 'Pardon' had not been obtained at the time he made his will, in the event of failure, £40 was to be given to the Greyfriars for reparations, which was about the cost of the 'pardon'. In any case, the chapel was to be built and mass celebrated daily there according to the covenant which was still to be drawn up.

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63. PCC, 4 Blamyr.

64. PCC, 25 Fetiplace.

By his will of 1518 John Haddon provided for his soul in a variety of ways.[65] He gave £10 to the monks of the Charterhouse 'to be prayed fore there', and 20s. to each of the two house of friars in the city for two trentals from each. To the monks of the priory he gave a silver cup 'to be prayed for as a brother of their Chapterhouse', and to the monastery of Winchcombe, Gloucestershire, 'A Nott' [sic] for the same purpose. He made several bequests to the poor, but one in particular is of interest. He directed that 'every Sonday by the space of xii Monethes after my departyng of this World that there shalbe dalte to poore folks 3s.4d. And at that daye xii Monethes I will myn Executors kepe my terment (The anniversary of his interment or burial?) and to spende at that daye as shalbe meteley for such A man as I am to be dalte at that same daye to poore folks £10'. Such a bequest was undoubtedly religiously motivated. Haddon sought to maintain a weekly round of prayers by the poor for a year with a final burst of intensive prayer on the anniversary of his death, or his 'year-day' as it was called, when he wanted a repetition of the funeral services. After this immediate burst of intercession Haddon turned to provision for the longer term. First he provided for a priest of the parish church of Rowley, Shropshire, 'where I was borne', to sing perpetually for his soul, his wife's soul and the souls of his father and mother and all of his friends. Similarly, he provided for a stipendiary priest to celebrate mass daily in Our Lady's Chapel in St. Michael's in Coventry for ever. The Drapers were to have the responsibility of seeing that these two priests performed their duties and, since this craft owned the Lady Chapel in St. Michael's, presumably it would have been their priest

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65. PCC, · 17 Ayloffe.

who would have celebrated mass for him there. The Drapers were also to see that an obit was kept in the same chapel for him in perpetuity, and it was to give 5s. to the Greyfriars on St. Giles Day (1 September) each year for a friar to keep an obit for him also in perpetuity. Haddon, of course, also contributed to the building of the Greyfriars church, and he instructed the Drapers to see that a daily mass was said for him and his wife in their church for ever. Altogether, Haddon provided for three priests to celebrate mass daily for his soul and two obits, all in perpetuity.

Our last example is Richard Marler, who made his will in 1526.[66] He bequeathed £5 to the Charterhouse to say dirge and requiem mass for him on the day of his burial and at other times, and 10s. to the Greyfriars and Whitefriars to sing dirge and requiem mass for him on the day of his burial and escort his body to the church. All secular priests in Coventry were to have 4d for the same, and both secular and regular priests in the city were to have 1d. each to have his soul in remembrance at their masses on the day of his burial. To every craft in Coventry that maintained a priest Marler bequeathed 10s. in order that each occupation escorted his body to church and have his name and that of his wife 'before them on a Table on theire Aulters for the space of a yere'. He made further provision for his soul by giving a goblet with a cover and a dozen spoons to the house of Syon to stand in their hall, as well as 100 lbs. of wax, and a 'quarter ton' of wax to every house of the Observant Franciscans and Carthusians in the realm to the intent that all of them should pray for his soul and the souls of his benefactors. He also gave 10s. to Roger Couche, priest, to pray for him. Long-term intercession was provided by a

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66. PCC, F 20 Porch.

perpetual chantry in a chapel in Holy Trinity which Marler had had built during his life, where his body was to be 'buried in the sepulture prepared for the same'. The priest was to celebrate mass daily for his soul, the souls of his wife and all his kin as well as all christian souls. A yearly obit was also to be kept by the same priest, when the funeral services of placebo, dirge and requiem mass were to be celebrated. Marler set aside lands worth £13 to endow the chantry.

Few people could afford anything like the enormous investment in masses and prayers made by the individuals so far mentioned, who were members of the wealthy ruling classes. The extent to which any testator provided for his soul appears to have been in proportion to his personal wealth. Some wills contain no provision for the health of the testator's soul, perhaps because he was too poor to make any. On average, however, between 1485 and 1547 two out of every three testators made some provision for their souls, or indicated that they wished some to be made. There are many examples of testators who made no provision for their souls in their wills, but who stated at the end of them 'I will that my executors shall dispose for the health of my soul after their discretion', which would have been made out of the residue of their estates, their will performed, their debts paid and their funeral expenses met. Some testators who instructed their executors to make provision for their souls did so even though they had already made some provision themselves. William Ford, John Haddon and Richard Marler might be cited as examples of testators who did this. It would seem that they were giving their executors leave to make further provision for their spiritual well-being at their discretion. The point, however, is that whatever their position in the community

at Coventry two thirds of testators wanted masses and prayers for their souls.

Now, this is not the whole story, for though two out of three testators requested masses and prayers for their souls, it does not mean that one out of three testators did not want them, or that they did not, in fact, provide for them. Wills do not present a complete picture on their own, and they have not been used on their own. There have already been some references to the provision made by some testators for the health of their souls which has not been found in their wills. Most notable among them is the Rood Chapel adjoining the Greyfriars church paid for by William Pysford the elder and his son Henry. Neither of the wills belonging to these two men mention it or make any reference to it which would suggest their part in its building. Had it not been for the survival of their Indentures of 1532 nothing would link the chapel to them. Another example is that of Thomas Brademeadow. We know about the provision he made for his soul from a document which he drew up for his feoffees, 'as touchyng my londes and tenementes howe they shalbe disposed after my decesse', dated 1 January 1493. It is worth comparing this document with his will, which was made on 9 September 1491, and more especially with a 'memorandum' which is appended to the will dated 18 January 1493.[67] This latter document makes direct references to the matter contained in the instructions to his feoffees, but it does not recount all that is to be found in those instructions. The memorandum refers to the stipendiary priest which was to be maintained in Sutton Coldfield church, although it states that the priest

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67. SBT/GHC, DR/10/397. The 'memorandum' is found with Brademeadow's will, PCC, 8Vox.

was to sing 'for me during my wyfs liffe', and not in perpetuity, as the feoffees instructions have it. The obit to be kept in St. Michael's is referred to, although it is not stated for what length of time it was to be kept. Only the feoffees' instructions state that it was to be kept in perpetuity. The twelve torches that were to be delivered to St. Michael's church and the churches of Sutton Coldfield, Stoke and Stivichall are properly referred to. But the memorandum does not mention the obit that was to be kept in perpetuity in Sutton Coldfield church, any of the lights that were to be kept in the same or the clerk of the Greyfriars who was to preach a sermon yearly on All Souls Day. An accurate assessment of the provision Brademeadow made for his soul could not have been achieved without the document in which he gave instructions to his feoffees. Brademeadow's will and the memorandum are found together among the wills of the prerogative court of Canterbury. His instructions to his feoffees are found in the record office at Stratford-upon-Avon. It is likely that his story was not unusual, and that we therefore have in many cases an incomplete picture of the provision which individuals made for their souls.

Wills themselves not infrequently refer to other deeds and documents relating to such provision. John Padlond in 1516 provided for an obit in perpetuity to be kept in Holy Trinity in Coventry, which he stated in his will was to be conducted 'in manner and forme as myn Executours have a bill of my mynde'. This is a clear reference to other documentation which has not survived.[68] In some cases the reference is more full, as in the case of John Smyth in

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68. PCC, 15 Holder.

1512, who dwelt at length on the indentures which had been drawn up concerning his tomb in the Greyfriars church in Coventry.[69] In 1509 Richard Lee referred to instructions he had left his executors regarding the disposal of the residue of his goods. He stated that they were 'to order and dispose hit for the helth of my soule aftur their discrecion in suche good werks as I have shewed unto theym'.[70] In some cases a reference is found to some form of provision which is not fully explained. For example, in 1507 Joan Semans instructed her executors 'that there be wared [spent] on vestments and a Cope for myn owne Chauntrye £5'. This suggests that a chantry was founded by her, yet there is no other reference to it in her will. Presumably she was referring to something for which her executors already held instructions.[71] Some references to other documentation have already been mentioned. For example, in several cases testators (in return for their gifts towards the new building work on the friary churches) referred to indentures drawn up between them and the friaries for masses and prayers. How many other citizens made similar contributions and held similar indentures but did not mention them in their wills? To reiterate the point, therefore, the provision for the health of their souls made by testators in their wills is often incomplete, and some allowance for this must be made when interpreting the wills.

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So far the discussion has concentrated on a period which covers roughly the last decade of the fifteenth century and the first quarter or first third of the sixteenth, a period in which testators provided for their souls on a very lavish scale. This was not to last, however, for from the late 1520s and early 1530s onwards

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69. See above, 80-81.

70. PCC, 27 Bennett.

71. PCC, 29 Adeane.

fewer testators provided for their souls and those who did provided on a much more modest scale. The decline in bequests for masses and prayers is most marked in the 1530s, particularly between 1533 and 1537. It has been pointed out that in this period all the wills were proved locally and tended to belong to the less wealthy and poorer citizens, who could not afford to make other sorts of religious bequests in their wills. The decline in bequests for masses and prayers in this period is due to this same inability to afford to make such bequests. From the late 1530s to 1547 bequests for masses and prayers increase, as wills survive belonging to more wealthy citizens.

However, even those who might have been thought able to provide for their souls were not giving as much as had been given before the late 1520s and early 1530s. Gone are the multiple provisions which were so much a feature of the earlier period, and only a few testators made provision in more than one way. Thus in 1529 Henry Perkins, a grasier and an alderman, provided for a stipendiary priest to say mass daily for his soul for a year and gave property to maintain the Lady Mass in Holy Trinity, in return for which the parish was to see that a yearly obit was kept for his soul in perpetuity. In 1530 Thomas Waren, dyer, mayor in 1519, provided for a stipendiary priest for a year and for a perpetual obit. He also gave 'a goblett of silver and parcell gilt' to Fillongley church, 'that it shall serve the howsling people in the said parishe church upon Ester day And that the vicar of the said churche shall desire all the parishens upon every Ester day and that at the first high masse and the secunde every man and woman to say a pater noster and an Ave for the soule of Thomas Waryn Margery his wife and all xpen soules'. He also gave his scarlet gown, or the value thereof, to Corley church to be prayed for in like manner,

and to the same church he bequeathed 12d. a year 'towards the fynding of a lampe contynually to brenne [burn] in the said churche forever'. Similarly in 1532 John Humphrey, dyer, mayor of Coventry twice in 1516 and 1525, provided for an obit for seven years and a stipendiary priest for three. In 1536 Thomas Heryng provided for a stipendiary priest for one year and for an obit in perpetuity. Isabel Wade, widow, late the wife of Christopher Wade, mercer, mayor in 1537, made her will in 1540. She provided for a stipendiary priest for five years and a yearly trental in perpetuity. In 1543 Robert Kirvyn, fishmonger, mayor in 1535, provided for a perpetual obit and a stipendiary priest for a year.[72]

Many other testators could afford to make only some small provision. In 1538 Thomas Astleyn, clothier, mayor in 1529, provided only for an obit for twenty one years. The following year Julian Nethermyll, draper, mayor in 1523 and Master of Trinity Guild in 1528, provided for a stipendiary priest for five years. In 1541 Roger Walles, ironmonger, mayor in 1530 and Master of Trinity Guild for two consecutive years in 1531 and 1532, provided for only a perpetual obit. The same year Hugh Laughton, capper, mayor in 1533 and Master of Trinity Guild in 1534, provided for a perpetual obit also. In 1542 John Jett, mercer, mayor in 1536, provided for a stipendiary priest for but one year. In 1544 Richard Heryng, grocer, mayor in 1527, provided for simply a perpetual obit. The same year Roger Palmer,

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72. LJRO, Register of Wills, B/C/10, PCC, 25 Janlcyn, LB, 665; PCC, 15 Thower, LB, 647, 691; LJRO, Heryng, Thomas, 8/3/36, LB, 693, 679 - 711; PCC, 27 Alenger, LB, 725; PCC, 9 Pynyng, LB, 721.

draper, mayor in 1534, provided for a stipendiary priest for one year. In 1545 Thomas Dodd, mercer, mayor in 1528, provided for a stipendiary priest for only one year.[73]

This decline in the level of provision was not due to any disenchantment with the doctrine of Purgatory, however, but to the consequences of poverty. Quite simply, testators could no longer afford to make lavish provision for their souls. By the late 1520s and early 1530s Coventry was a poverty-stricken city, which had already endured a half century of economic decline and decay. There was still a desire on the part of testators to provide masses and prayers for their souls after this time, as is shown by the examples given above. Testators still sought to provide for their souls as well as they could, and in many cases would have liked to make more provision than they did.

One indication of this is provided by a particular form of reversionary bequest. Throughout the period 1485 to 1547 there are examples of testators making bequests to their children with the proviso that, if they died before inheriting the bequest, it was to be used to endow masses and prayers for the health of their, the testators, souls, distributed in alms to the poor for their souls or given in 'deeds of charity' or 'deeds of mercy'. In the earlier period there are twelve examples of this sort of reversionary clause

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73. LJRO, Astleyn, Thomas, 12/10/40, LB, 696; PCC, 6 Alenger, LB, 684, G. Templeman (ed.), The Records of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, St. Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Katherine of Coventry, (Dugdale Society, xix, 1944), 68; LJRO, Walles, Roger, 18/4/41, LB, 700, Templeman, loc. cit.; LJRO, Laughton, Hugh, 11/10/41, LB, 714, Templeman, op. cit., 69; LJRO, Geat, John, 9/2/45, LB, 723; LJRO, Heryng, Richard, 13/10/44, LB, 693; LJRO, Palmer, Roger, 12/2/44, LB, 717; PCC, f 44 Pynyng, LB, 694.

attached to bequests to children. In all but one case the testators who acted thus had already made some provision for their souls.[74] In the latter period there are nine examples of the clause, but in only three cases did the testators concerned also make direct provision for their own souls.[75] In the other six cases they made none. So it seems that the testators in the latter period were putting their children's welfare before that of their own souls in a time of economic depression. Perhaps they hoped their children would make some provision for them when they were able.

Some of the testators were most specific in what was to be done if their children died before coming into their inheritance. When John Foleshill divided his lands up among his children in 1495 he added the clause that, if any died without lawful issue, the land was to remain with those still living, and if they all died without lawful issue the lands were to 'Remayne unto the Awter of Saint Nicholas in

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74. William Hudson, 1486, SBT/GHC DR/10/394; John Folshill, 1495, PCC, 27 Vox; John Mathew, 1498, 28 Horne; John Dwale, 1499, 2 Moore; William Hopkins, 1500, 22 Moore; Thomas Bond, 1506, 22 Adeane; Richard Jackson, 1510, 31 Bennett; Edmund Hadley, 1511, 7 Fetiplace; Richard Fosdale, 1511, 31 Fetiplace; William Pysford, 1517, 9 Ayloffe; Thomas Turnour, 1518, 11 Ayloffe; Thomas Ford, 1518, 14 Ayloffe. The testator who made no provision himself for his soul in his will was John Folshill.

75. LJRO, Mosell, Thomas 1527, 26/6/28; Rysley, William 1531, PCC, 6 Thower; LJRO, Parker, William 1538, 17/7/38; Grene, Alice 1538, 15/10/38; Astleyn, Thomas 1538, 12/10/40; Smyth, Robert 1544, 23/3/44; Townshend, Richard 1544, 12/2/44; Lawton, John 1546, 27/4/47; Bowker, Thomas 1546, 27/4/47. The three testators who did make provision for their souls in their wills were Thomas Mosell, Thomas Astleyn and John Lawton.

the foresaid hospital or ells to be sold and the money therof to be disposed to the honorment of the said Awter for to be prayed fore forever'. In 1518 Thomas Ford left his property to his daughter and the heirs of her body lawfully begotten. If she died without lawful issue the lands were to be divided between the children of his brother and sister, except that a property in Corvisers Row which was to be used to endow an obit in perpetuity for Ford's soul worth 26s.8d in St. Michael's. Ford made little provision for his soul, merely bequeathing some property to maintain St. Anthony's Mass in St.Michael's, doubtless with a view to sharing in the benefits of the mass. In 1538 Thomas Astelyn (already mentioned) bequeathed £6 to his son when he came of age, but if he died before doing so the money was to be used to hire a priest to pray for his, Astelyn's, soul. In 1546 John Lawton made bequests of 20 marks (£13 6s.8d) to each of his sons and £10 to his daughter all of whom were under age. He directed that if one of them should die before coming of age their bequest was to be used to hire 'a honest priest of good conversacon & won well able to helpe gods service in the quere' to pray for his soul for two years, receiving 8 marks (£5 6s.8d.) a year, and if two of them should die before reaching lawful age the priest was to be hired for three years. He did not say what was to happen if all three died before inheriting the money, however. Otherwise he provided for an obit for six years for his own soul. These reversionary clauses which testators added to bequests to their children reveal the use which the lands and monies would most likely have been put to if they had not been given to their children.[76]

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76. PCC, 27 Vox; 14 Ayloffe; LJRO, Astleyn, Thomas, 12/10/40; Lawton, John, 27/4/47.

Few testators who made provision for the health of their souls in the 1530s and 1540s sought to make it perpetual. Most endowed masses and prayers for a finite number of years. This was probably due to changes in the law. The most sure way of founding an intercessory institution was by obtaining a licence of mortmain, but by the end of the fifteenth century the Crown was reluctant to grant them other than in exceptional circumstances and for exhorbitant fines. An alternative device for establishing them which avoided the mortmain laws was to grant lands to feoffees to the use of the intercessory institution, which, because of circumstances, became the most common way to proceed. In 1532, however, the Crown prevented individuals from utilizing feoffments to use in this way. The 'Act for feoffments and assurances of lands and tenements made to the use of any parish church, chapel, or such like' made such arrangements void and illegal. It was explained that because of the numerous feoffments made to the use of chantries, guilds and churches, 'there groweth and issueth to the king our sovereign lord and to other lords and subjects of the realm the same like losses and inconveniences, and it is as much prejudicial to them as doth and is in case where lands be alienated into mortmain'. The aim of the act, therefore, was to prevent the king's feudal revenues, and those of other landowners, from being diminished if their lands came into the hands of the undying church. Henceforward, feoffments to religious uses were permitted for only twenty years or less. The Act did not prevent the Crown issuing mortmain licences, but, since it had adopted the policy of not doing so, foundations were effectively restricted to a life of twenty years.[77]

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77. The Crown's attitude to mortmain licenses and the Act of 1532 are discussed at length by A. Kreider, English Chantries, The Road to Dissolution, (Harvard UP, 1979), 71 - 86.

The only mortmain licence known to have been obtained for a Coventry foundation was that for Bond's Hospital in 1507. In 1524 Richard Burwey gave lands to support a perpetual obit. He instructed Nicholas Burway to 'make issue as lernid councill can devise at his propre costs that my obite mortyed to be kept surely forever'. If the attempt failed the obit was to be assured by continual re-feoffment of the lands. When Richard Marler established his chantry in 1526 he did not bother to attempt to obtain a mortmain licence. He seems to have been well aware of the Crown's reluctance to grant any. After he had listed which of his properties were to endow his chantry he added that, 'And if it happen eny parcell of the sayed landes Tenements and other hereditaments at eny tyme herafter to be recoverid ayent my feoffees by the lawe with drawen or otherwise diminished whereby the sayed preste or obit shuld not be yerely kepte and mayntened as is above expressed Then I will that a like portion of the best of my landes and Tenements Rents and other like hereditaments .....be appoynted unite and annexed in theire lying and place unto the other parcells of landes Tenements Rents and hereditamenz above expressed by the oversight of my sayed feoffees executours and overseer so that the sayed londes Tenements and other premissis may be ever of the clere yearly valewe of xiii li. sterling by yere above all charges for the continuall keping and mayntenyng of the sayed prieste and obite for ever'. The commissioners of the Valor were possibly surprised that Marler had not obtained a mortmain licence, something they were at pains to point out in their returns. After recording the value of the chantry they noted adhunc non mortiza.[78]

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78. See above, 76 ; PCC, 28 Bodfelde; f 20 Porch; Valor, 60.

Some founders complied, reluctantly no doubt, with the Act of 1532, but others defiantly founded institutions for longer periods than twenty years and in perpetuity, their desire for long-term intercession outweighing their respect for the law. For example, Joan Dudley was clearly aware of the act when she sought to establish an obit in perpetuity by her will in 1544. She instructed her son to keep a yearly obit for her soul and the souls of her two husband's for the time of his life with the rent from a house she had purchased. After his death the house was to be given to 'the men of Jesus' to see that the obit was kept forever each year, that is, 'yf the lawe will suffer yt'.

Other examples of testators seeking to establish obits in defiance of the law include Katherine Bedyll, who made her will in 1534. She instructed her feoffees to permit the keepers of 'Our Lady Rent' in Holy Trinity to receive the rents of a tenement in Much Park Street and two closes in Counden so long as the keepers saw that a yearly obit was kept for her soul in perpetuity. In 1541 Roger Walles left a house in Spon Street and a chief rent next to the same to maintain a yearly obit in perpetuity at the Smith's altar in St. Michael's to his wife for her life. After her death the house and chief rent were to go to the Smiths so long as they maintained a priest to pray for all benefactors of the craft. If the Smiths no longer maintained a priest the house and chief rent were to be given to maintain Preston's chantry in the same church, whose priest was to see the obit performed.[79]

Some testators seem to have sought to get around the law by entrusting the performance of their obits to their families, rather

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79. LJRO, Dudley, Joan, 26/4/47; Byddle, Katherine, 27/1/34; Walles, Roger, 18/4/41.

than to feoffees or institutions. In 1540 Isabel Wade bequeathed her lands and tenements to her son and his heirs, desiring them to see that a trental was performed yearly forever for her soul, her husband's soul and all Christian souls. Similarly, the following year Hugh Laughton, wanting a yearly obit in perpetuity, entrusted its performance to his son and his heirs. He left two tenements 'before the crowne' and two cottages in Smithford Street to his son, adding, 'And for lake of heares of his bodie lawfullie begotten to remayne to the next heare and so frome heare to heare to the nexte of the blode'. In 1543 Robert Kirvyn instructed his wife and son to see that a yearly obit was kept for his soul 'in such forme and maner as they shall thinke good'. Kirvyn left the obit entirely in the hands of his family, therefore. In 1546 Richard Herynge left instructions that the rents from a certain piece of land in Allesley were to be given to the churchwardens of Allesley church to support a yearly obit for his soul forever on 27 April. He did not state who was to have the property, or if it had been enfeoffed to this use, however, although it seems that he left all his property to his wife and son. Presumably, he intended his wife and son and his son's heirs to see that the obit was kept.[80]

By entrusting the maintenance of their obits to their families, these testators thought, probably rightly, that they had the best chance of being undetected. It would have taken a massive effort to detect those intercessory institutions which broke the law, and the likelihood was further reduced if there were as few records of it as

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80. PCC, 27 Alenger; LJRO, Laughton, Hugh, 11/10/41; PCC, 9 Pynyng; LJRO, Heryng, Richard, 13/10/44.

possible. Agreements with institutions, such as churches, crafts and guilds, increased, however slightly, the chance of detection, whereas no such documentary agreements were presumably needed between members of a family. It is to be wondered, therefore, how many testators did not even mention provision for their souls in their wills if it was for a term longer than twenty years. Those testators who did, however, provide invaluable evidence that there was still a strong desire on the part of many to provide for their souls even in defiance of the law.

The decline in the establishment of intercessory institutions also has much to do with the progress of the Reformation itself. Purgatory was not repudiated in Henry VIII's reign, but it was called into question, and people would have heard constant denials of Purgatory by the reformist preachers. There were 'anticipatory' dissolutions, when people moved to dissolve intercessory institutions themselves. Some did so for private gain, others to keep foundations from falling into the hands of a predatory monarch. The Crown itself authorised some dissolutions before the Henrician Chantries Act, though these were probably as a result of influential people who coveted the endowment lands of the institution. Then there was the abortive Henrician Chantries Act itself. All these things served to make people uncertain, not only of the existence of Purgatory, but also of whether or not any institution founded by them was likely to survive in the climate of the time: there was no point in making a substantial financial investment if it was

going to be lost to the Crown or some private individual.[81]

The decline in the extent of long-term provision for the soul was partly counter-balanced by an increase in provision for funerals in the 1530s and especially the 1540s. All took it for granted that they would receive a Christian burial according to their degree, consisting of placebo and dirge overnight before burial the following day with requiem mass, and a repetition of these services thirty days later at their 'month's mind'. What testators were doing was elaborating upon these services in a variety of ways to add to the impressiveness of the occasion and attract as large a number of worshippers as they could. The point of the 'extras' was to secure as many masses and prayers as possible at this time in a sort of once- and for-all burst of propitiation to Heaven for the soul of the deceased, because subsequent masses and prayers could not be afforded. With a view to increasing the number of masses celebrated at their funeral, testators increased the number of priests who were to perform them, and any number might be requested. There were requests for additional parish priests, for craft priests of the Hospital of St. John, for the friars from both houses in the city, for the monks of the Charterhouse and those of the priory, to act in one or other or both capacities, in any number and in any combination and permutation. A

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81. Kreider, op. cit., discusses the impact of the progress of the Reformation upon the founding of intercessory institutions in chapters 4 - 7. Chapter 6, entitled 'Anticipatory Dissolutions', utilises many local examples, and chapter 7, 'The Henrician Chantries Act, 1545', looks at royally initiated dissolutions in the five year period prior to the Act. Coventry has its own examples of 'anticipatory' dissolutions and royally initiated dissolutions, See below, 381-402.

large number of masses on the day of their burial may have gone some way to satisfy testators who could not afford to endow them subsequently. Requesting additional priests, however, was something relatively new. Other sorts of additional arrangements had been made before this time, but only on a few occasions did testators ask for more priests. As for the other arrangements, they might include a distribution of alms to all of the poor who attended the funeral in return for their prayers for the deceased. This was a popular bequest. Some testators employed numbers of the poor to carry tapers or torches about their hearse on the day of burial, and many saw to it that large numbers of lights were provided anyway. There were also requests for additional peels of bells to summon worshippers, and sometimes testators provided for a 'recreation' of food and drink after their burial for all of those who attended it.[82] A few testators made these sorts of additional arrangements with regard to their 'month's mind', but the small number who did suggests that it was not a common practise.[83]

In the later period, therefore, testators combined an elaborate funeral with a modicum of subsequent masses and prayers. For example, in 1531 George Elysden, a saddler, whose long-term provision for his

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82. See Appendix, Tables 42 - 46 and also Table 51.

83. There are only two examples of testators elaborating upon the arrangements for their 'month's mind'. In 1518 William Pysford the younger gave £10 to be distributed to the poor at his burial and at his 'month's mind', (PCC, 22 Ayloffe), and in 1546 John Lawton requested that nine priests and three clerks were to perform the services at his 'month's mind' and his craft, the Cappers, was to make an offering at the mass, having 20d. for their pains. (LJRO, Lawton, John, 27/4/47).

soul comprised of hiring a stipendiary priest to sing for his soul in St. Thomas' chapel in St. Michael's for a year, made extensive arrangements for his death and burial. On every day which his body remained unburied there were to be three peals of bells. The funeral services were to be sung by twelve priests and three clerks of St. Michael's and all the priests and clerks of Bablake church. His body was to be escorted to burial by twelve poor men each carrying a taper worth 2d., receiving for their labour a 1d. each, and the crafts of Cardmakers and Saddlers, who were to receive 12d each. Bread doles to the value of 10s. were to be distributed to the poor on the day of burial, and the same amount was to be spent on food and drink for his neighbours.[84] There are almost no other examples until the late 1530s, because few wills have survived belonging to the wealthy. Otherwise the pattern of these sorts of bequests would probably be constant. From the late 1530s and the 1540s elaborate additional funeral arrangements are again found in the wills.

It is curious that between the late 1520s and early 1530s and 1547 a number of aldermen demanded in their wills their right to be buried 'according to the laudable custom of aldermen in this city'. There are no instances of such a demand being made by an alderman in his will among the surviving wills before this time, and no obvious reason why they should suddenly begin to do this. The coincidence of such demands with the proliferation of more elaborate funerals at this time is perhaps not without significance, however. An alderman's funeral would have been different from that of any other person's. It was doubtless an elaborate affair, and no one would have been left in any doubt as to the rank of the person being buried. With more

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84. LJRO, Register of wills, B/C/10.

and more individuals elaborating upon their basic funeral arrangements, aldermen's funerals would not appear as grand as they once had. By demanding their right to be buried according to this custom the aldermen could be confident that their funerals would stand out from others, in keeping with their exalted status.

This did not stop aldermen making additional provision for their funerals as others did. In 1529 Henry Perkins requested the Greyfriars and Whitefriars to escort his body to church and perform additional funeral services. In 1541 Hugh Laughton wanted all the priests in Coventry to escort his body to church and keep the services prescribed for this time. He also wanted a trental celebrated on the day of his burial, and 20s. distributed to the poor. When Roger Palmer made his will in 1544 he made considerable additional funeral arrangements. To begin with, he wanted fourteen named crafts to escort his body to church and make offerings. The following are the crafts whose attendance he requested and the amount he paid them for doing so: Mercers, 3s.4d., Drapers, 2s.8d., Shermen and Tailors, 2s.4d., Cappers, 2s.4d., Smiths, 2s.4d., Butchers, 2s.4d., Bakers, 20d., Weavers, 20d., Corvisers, 20d., Walkers, 20d., Tanners, 20d., Whittawers, 20d., Dyers, 20d., Girdlers, 20d. He wished his body to be escorted to the church by twenty-four poor men bearing tapers and torches. He instructed that 34 lbs. of wax was to be bought to make them. The poor men were each to receive 2d. and a black gown and hood for their trouble. No doubt they were also to wear the gown and hood for the burial. In addition, £7 7s. was to be dealt out to the poor on the day of his burial. Palmer also provided for five trentals of masses to be celebrated in a way which neatly linked his death, burial and 'month's mind' together as a period of constant intercession. He directed that one trental was to be celebrated on the day of his death, another on the day of his burial and the remaining three at weekly intervals thereafter until

his 'month's mind' in the fourth week. In 1545 Thomas Dodd requested that every priest in Coventry should escort his body to church. He gave 53s.4d. to be distributed to the poor on the day of his burial. Not every alderman who requested burial according to custom made additional arrangements, however. Some contented themselves with what they could already expect. Christopher Wade in 1539, John Jett in 1542 and William Cotton in 1546 made no bequests for extras, and in Wade's and Cotton's cases no provision for their souls at all.[85]

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Religious preambles have so far been left out of the discussion, but something might be said about them here in the light of the preceding discussion on religious bequests. Essentially, they fall into three types: first, there is the 'traditional' or 'orthodox' bequest, in which the testator bequeaths his or her soul to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the Saints or Holy Company of Heaven. Then there is the 'neutral' bequest, in which the testator bequeaths his or her soul simply to God. Lastly, there is the bequest which rejects the traditional form altogether and embraces the new Protestant theology. Testators disposing of their soul in this last way stress the sinfulness of man and his reliance upon the mercy of Christ for salvation, bequeathing their soul to God, and solely trusting through the merits of Christ's Passion to be saved. Some preambles are termed 'mixed', because they combine elements of the traditional form of preambles with those more readily associated with the Protestant formula: a testator might bequeath his soul to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Holy Company of Heaven, while trusting to be saved through the

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85. LJRO, Henry Perkins, Register of Wills, B/C/10; Laughton, Hugh, 11/10/41; Palmer, Roger, 12/2/44; PCC, 1 Alenger; 32 Dyngley; LJRO, Geat, John, 9/2/45; PCC, f 51 Alen.

merits of Christ's Passion.[86]

The major drawback with religious preambles is that it is not clear just what they reflect. It is now generally accepted that they cannot be taken at face value as indicators of the religious beliefs and attitudes of the testators in whose wills they appear. Their unreliability is mirrored frequently in the contradictions between them and bequests found in the body of wills. The most common case is of a 'Protestant' preamble followed by requests for masses and prayers in the body of the will. Some preambles undoubtedly were chosen by testators themselves, and are an accurate reflection of their religious beliefs, but unless there is some indication of this it cannot be assumed. Occasionally a testator states that he wrote his own will and so the preamble must be assumed to be his own choice. Most preambles were probably included by the priest or clerk who wrote the will, however, or the priest who would have been present when the will was written. Some wills were almost certainly written by other individuals, local notaries, scriveners and officers of ecclesiastical courts, for example, but since they were usually written when the testator was on his deathbed, or at least his sickbed, a priest would more than likely have been present. We are brought to the conclusion, therefore, that preambles are more likely to reflect the views of the priest present when the will was made than those of the testator. However, there were influences at work on the priests as well, in particular that of the regime of the moment: they would have been required to promote the doctrine of the official Church, and so preambles, especially in the Reformation period, can reflect the changes in religion that were taking place.

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86. See Appendix, Table 2.

Preambles can really be used only to establish general religious trends, and so when looking at them it is necessary to identify significant departures from an established pattern: any mass movement away from this is a likely indication of something. The most striking feature of the preambles from the Coventry wills is the large number of neutral preambles between the early 1520s and 1539. It is possible that this shift first occurred in the late 1500s, when a concentration of neutral preambles extending to the mid-1510s first appears: it may be that no wills with neutral preambles have survived between this time and the early 1520s. Prior to the late 1500s, with a few exceptions, the preambles maintain an orthodox catholic line. However, there is no obvious reason for the omission of Mary and the saints over such a long period of time. It seems to have been a local phenomenon, but there is nothing about Coventry's own particular circumstances which would explain it.

A further significant change in the patterns of preambles occurs after 1539. Neutral preambles all but disappear between 1540 and the end of Henry VIII's reign. There is a large increase in the number of traditional forms of preambles, and the appearance of a significant number of mixed ones. A possible explanation is that these changes were due to the passing of the Act of Six Articles in 1539, which reasserted Catholic doctrine. This would in fact explain the increase in traditional forms. Perhaps they result from official instructions to priests to ensure that wills conformed to the Henrician regime.

It is not at all clear, however, what the appearance of mixed preambles signifies. The problem of interpreting them is compounded by the fact that it is not clear what a mixed preamble means anyway. There is nothing incompatible with Catholic doctrine to hope to be

saved through the merits of Christ's Passion, so this form of preamble does not necessarily indicate unorthodox beliefs. But it is an unusual form to use in this way when there are so many traditional ones available. It must be seen as indicative of something else, therefore. A few examples appear in the first decades of the sixteenth century, which seem to have been due to the influence of James Preston, vicar of St. Michael's between 1488 and 1507, who was on very good terms with most of the testators concerned. They are discussed at length elsewhere.[87] Mixed preambles may indicate confused religious beliefs and perhaps a degree of 'playing safe' by combining elements of both Catholic and Protestant forms. Therefore, they might be seen as a reaction by priests who were sympathetic to the new religion.

The most striking thing about religious preambles throughout the whole period is that their 1539 - 1547 pattern recurs after Mary's accession in 1553. Again there is a sudden increase in traditional forms, accompanied by the appearance of a number of mixed preambles, examples of which are not found in the years immediately preceding, while neutral preambles almost disappear completely. There are also a number of Protestant preambles, but not enough to alter this picture. The explanation must be that both these periods were marked by a reassertion of Catholic doctrine, the first with the Act of Six Articles and the second with Mary's accession. The clergy at Coventry reacted in the same way both times.

There are two wills of Henry VIII's reign which contain Protestant preambles, indicating that a priest or priests in Coventry had embraced the new religion. Both are good examples of the inconsistencies which are often found between the preamble and specific bequests further on

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87. See below, 496-97.

in the will. In 1539 John Foxalle, draper, bequeathed his soul in the following manner: 'to almyghtie god the father my creator, beseching hyme thorough the merits of crysts bitter passion I may have forgivenes of all offencs & synnes commytted to his displeasure & that he woll take me unto his grace & mercye'. He made no provision for his soul, but he did leave instructions regarding his funeral. He requested a peal of bells immediately after his death, followed by another peel as his body was conveyed to the church, followed by a third peel at the time of his burial, which he wished to be conducted with dirge and requiem mass 'for my soull'. He gave no instructions as to the number of priests, etc., but stated that 'every priest being therat' was to receive 4d. and every clerk 2d. which meant that the number could be anything. The other individual whose will contains a Protestant preamble is Elizabeth Smyth, widow of Robert Smyth, skinner, who in 1545 bequeathed her soul to 'allmighty God, trusting in our saviour Jesu Christe yt thorow ye merits of his glorious passion my soule shalbe savid'. But she also requested burial with dirge and mass, celebrated by twelve priests, four clerks and two children, and with seven peels of bells. There was to be 10s. distributed in bread to the poor on the same day. The disposal of the residue of her estate she entrusted to Thomas and Joan Skonse 'to pray for my sowle'.[88]

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Wills have proved invaluable in establishing religious beliefs and attitudes in the pre-Reformation period and the first stages of the Reformation, showing that there was widespread devotion to the old religion in Coventry to the end of Henry VIII's reign. It is difficult to establish religious beliefs and attitudes in Edward VI's reign

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88. LJRO, Foxalle, John, 13/10/39; Smyth, Elizabeth, 6/5/49.

through wills, however. Between 1547 and 1553 Catholicism was swept away and Protestantism erected as the official religion of England; the old liturgy was expunged, 'superstitious' practises were outlawed and the all important intercessory institutions were dissolved. As a result there was no point in Edwardian testators making most of the sorts of bequests Henrician testators had made, and so there are few religious bequests to be found in the Edwardian wills, which, of course, form the basis of any analysis of wills. Those which were made were either in defiance of the official religion, which are rare, or of a sort which were not expressly forbidden.

It was the first dissolutions and spoliation of the Edwardian regime which had the greatest effect upon religious bequests, although the ever-present threat of further spoliation was doubtless also influential. The Royal Injunctions of July 1547 ordered the removal of all shrines, images, paintings and pictures 'abused' with pilgrimages and offerings, 'for the avoiding of that detestable offence of idolatry'. All torches, tapers, candles and 'images of wax' set before any image or picture were also to be removed, as were all candlesticks, 'trindles' and 'rolls of wax', in order that 'there remain no memory of the same in walls, glass windows, or elsewhere within their parish churches or houses'. Only two lights on the high altar, 'for the signification that Christ is the very true light of the world', were permitted. Side chapels, altars, statues, images, pictures, wall-paintings and windows were dismantled, smashed or defaced. Large areas of the church walls were whitewashed. After these Injunctions testators were not going to make bequests to side-chapels and altars, or pay for gilding of images and altars, maintain lights before the same, provide ornaments and vestments, or give valuable and treasured possessions as they once had done.

Bequests to the parish churches all but cease in Edward's reign.

There were a few to the high altar of St. Michael's in 1548: 12d. by John Thrushare, draper, 2d. by Joan Griffin, 12d. by Isabel Seny and 12d. by Thomas Clerk, mercer, but there were no bequests of this sort to Holy Trinity. In 1550 Simon Parker, grasier, warden in 1524, sheriff in 1530 and mayor in 1539, bequeathed 10s. towards the repair of Holy Trinity. In 1552 Christopher Bromley, bucklemaker, bequeathed 6d. to the repair of St. Michael's. There were no bequests to the side chapels and altars, however. One bequest of 4d. to the Jesus altar in St. Michael's was made by William Shaw in his will of 5 April 1547, but this was before the Injunctions were issued.[89]

The Injunctions also affected burial and funeral arrangements. Testators changed the place of their burial as a result of the loss of the side chapels and altars. They usually left instructions as to where their bodies were to be buried, which was invariably in a particular chapel of a favoured saint, that belonging to their craft, before the altar or image of a favoured saint, by the seat where they were accustomed to kneel, or perhaps next to members of their family, especially parents, or their husbands and wives. In Edward's reign Most testators requested merely burial in the churchyard of their parish church. Others were even more vague, stating simply that they wished to be buried 'where it shall please god to appoint', or 'to be brought to the ground honestly' after the discretion of executors, husbands and wives, or merely to have 'a Christian man's burial'.

A few testators requested burial in their parish church, however.

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89. LJRO, Thrushare, John, ?/?/50; Gryffin, Joan, 6/5/49; Seny, Isabel, 13/10/50; PCC, F 2 Coode; LJRO, Parker, Simon, 13/4/51; Bromley, Christopher, 16/10/53; Shaw, William, 27/4/47.

These included John Thrushare, Isabel Seny, Thomas Clerk (who requested burial 'in the place where my two wives were buried'), John Bond, a weaver (who requested burial 'by the wevers Seatts'), and John Eburne, tanner, chamberlain in 1505 and 1549, sheriff in 1521 and bailiff the following year. The last two made their wills in 1550. John Chambers, capper, a member of the city council in the latter half of the 1540s, requested burial 'in the myddle Ile of the chorche of Saint Michael afore the pulpitt' in 1551. The following year Peter Goodestalk, surgeon, requested burial in either the church or churchyard of St. Michael's, and Margery Nethermyll, widow, late the wife of Julian Nethermyll, requested burial in St. Michael's as near to her husband as possible. Some requested burial in their parish church for the usual reasons set out above. Chambers' request suggests that he was sympathetic to the new religion.[90]

Surprisingly perhaps, some testators still requested burial in their parish church in one of the side chapels, or before one of the side altars. In 1549 Thomas Smyth, a draper, who was sheriff in 1539, bailiff the following year and thereafter a member of the city council, requested burial in the Drapers' chapel in St. Michael's. In 1550 Simon Parker requested burial in the Jesus chapel in the same church. John Leeche, 'draper and dyer', wished to be buried in St. Lawrence's chapel in St. Michael's in 1551. In 1552 Elizabeth Harvye requested burial in Corpus Christi chapel in Holy Trinity, while Thomas Bond the younger, grandson of the founder of Bond's hospital, requested burial 'under the stone of my grandefather in the Chappell

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90. LJRO, Bond, John, 12/5/50; Eburne, John, 13/4/51; LB, 604, 789, 677, 679; LJRO, Goodestalk, Peter, 17/10/52; Nethermyll, Margery, 25/7/52.

called our Ladies Chapell' in St. Michael's' and Cuthbert Joynour, draper, mayor in 1541, requested burial in the Drapers' chapel in St. Michael's 'before the seat that I was wonte to Knele'. In 1553 Humphrey Reynolds requested burial in the Drapers' chapel in St. Michael's, and Ralph Hopkins, tailor, chamberlain in 1531 and thereafter a member of the city council, requested burial in the Mercers' chapel in St. Michael's.[91] Bond's request was doubtless prompted by the desire to be buried with his grandfather. Others may have been motivated by a desire to be buried in the chapel belonging to their craft. Some may have requested burial for reasons of devotion to Mary or a favoured saint. This seems obvious in the case of John Leeche.

The elaborate additional provisions made by testators for their funerals in the later years of Henry VIII's reign are not found in the Edwardian wills. Some testators still requested additional priests, however, such as John Thrushare, who requested 'all the Priestes and Clarkes yt pertene or do any service in the parishe chirche of St. Michael's do Synge the obsequies for my sooll and all Cristen sooles that be ordeyned ffor them that be departed'. Margery Nethermyll requested 'all the Preistes and Clarkes in Saincte Michels Chirche aforesaide be presente at my buriall to praye for me the daye of my buriall'. Ralph Hopkins requested that 'all clerkes of St. Michael's shall syng the daye of my buryall all Services as shall be used ffor that tyme'. None of these testators requested placebo, dirge and requiem mass, which was perhaps left out so as not to offend.

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91. PCC, F 7 Coode, LB, 739, 740; LJRO, Leeche, John, 2/5/52; Harvye, Elizabeth, 14/1/52, PCC, F 21 Wrastley; 23 Wrastley, LB, 746; LJRO, Reynolds, Humphrey, 17/4/53; Hopkins, Ralph, 16/10/53, LB, 706.

One testator was not so prudent, however, for in 1551 Richard Northrop, a capper, requested burial in St. Michael's churchyard, '& ther to have biothe mas & dorghe'.[92]

There are also examples of testators requesting crafts, usually their own, to escort their body to church. Joan Griffin bequeathed the Cappers 16d. for doing so, and William Underwood 3s.4d. to the Corvisers for the same. In 1550 Henry Hynde requested that the Mercers escort his body to church and . have 3s.4d. for their pains. In 1553 Ralph Hopkins requested the Tailors and Shearmen to bring his body to church in return for 3s.4d. John Castell, grasier, requested that the Butchers escort his body in return for 6s.8d. and Joan Hopkins, widow, late the wife of Ralph Hopkins, also requested the Tailors and Shearmen to bring her body to church. None of these testators asked the crafts to make an offering as testators had done previously, again perhaps for reasons of prudence. Simon Parker did not request any craft fellowships to escort his body to church, but he did make the following provision: 'I gyve & bequethe to everye Crafte of felowship of the sayd Cyttye to pray for me as my executors & oversears shall thynk goode'.[93]

Some testators still made bequests to be distributed to the poor on the day of their burial. In 1549 Thomas Bedull, wheelwright, and Robert Hawtyn, yeoman, both bequeathed 5s. to be distributed to the poor the day of their burial. Richard Northop gave 12d. Margery Nethermyll bequeathed 40s. to be given 'to poor householders as are noo comen beggers' in amounts of 12d. Joan Hopkins gave 6s.8d to be

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92. LJRO, Northrop, Richard, 4/5/57.

93. LJRO, Underwood, William, 8/9/48; Hynde, Henry, 9/4/54, Castell, John, 12/10/51; Hopkins, Joan, 15/10/54.

given to the poor in bread. None stated that such bequests were for the health of their souls. Perhaps they were being discreet. Cuthbert Joynour was not being discreet, however, when he bequeathed £4 to be distributed to the poor on the day of his burial 'for my soule and all christen sowles'. Nor was Simon Parker when he bequeathed a gown each to twelve poor men of the city 'to praye for me'. For Joynour and Parker the relief of poverty was still motivated by religion, still looked upon as a 'good work'.[94]

There is only one further example of the sorts of additional funeral arrangements testators were making in the last years of Henry VIII's reign. Cuthbert Joynour instructed his executors to provide a 'dynnar' for his neighbours the day of his burial. He was the only individual to do so. A few testators did bequeath money to their crafts, apparently for the same purpose. John Chambers gave 5s. to the Cappers 'to make merry with', Joan Grascome gave 5s. to the Butchers wives 'to make myrye Amongst theme' and John Somerfield gave 2s. to the Weavers' wives 'to make murue withal' in 1552 and Ralph Hopkins gave 3s.4d to the Shearmen and Tailors 'to make merye withall'. Such bequests are exclusive to Edward's reign. The only comparable bequest, which is slightly different, from Henry VIII's reign is the 8d. which Thomas Philips gave to the bearers of his hearse 'to drinke' in 1545.[95]

Shortly after the Injunctions had been issued, in December 1547,

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94. LJRO, Bedull, Thomas, 5/3/49; Hawtyn, Robert, 7/7/50; See below, 369-73.

95. LJRO, Grascome, Joan, 17/10/52; Somerfield, John, 17/10/52; Philips, Thomas, 17/8/47.

Edward's first Parliament passed the new Chantries Act, which dissolved all chantries, free chapels, colleges, fraternities, guilds and all other institutions which maintained masses and prayers for the dead. In doing so the Edward regime officially repudiated the existence of Purgatory. The Act's preamble spoke of the superstitious errors and ignorance of salvation through the death of Christ which had been caused 'by devising and phantasying vain opinions of purgatory and masses satisfactory, to be done for them which be departed'. The impact of the Act must have been profound. For those who believed that masses and prayers shortened the years of Purgatory, and there is reason to believe there were many who thought like this in Coventry, the dissolution of the intercessory institutions must have been a grave blow to their consciences. Moreover, in that many chantries were situated in parish churches, the Chantries Act led to further depredations in addition to those which resulted from the recent Injunctions.

The result of this Act was predictable. No testators made bequests for masses during Edward's reign or were likely to do so when the endowments would automatically pass to the Crown. Some did ask for prayers when they made bequests to the poor and to those who attended their funerals. There is also one example of a testator, Robert Hawtyn, seeking prayers from his servant in return for a small consideration, He bequeathed 3s.4d. to his maid Alice 'to praye for my soule'. The bequest of Christopher Bromley, however, should be especially noted, for it is reminiscent of those found in many wills prior to 1547 when testators entrusted their executors to make provision for their souls. He bequeathed to his wife and executrix Elizabeth 'all my goods moveable & unmoveable & sche to gyve & bestow

for my soule as god shall putt hur in mynde'.

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Even though many Catholic testators withheld bequests which they might otherwise have made because of the changes in religion under Edward Vl, the number of testators who did make bequests is still extremely small in view of the widespread devotion to the old religion which existed at the end of Henry Vlll's reign. Since testators are usually of the older generation, many Edwardian testators would have been brought up as Catholics and lived all but a few years of their lives as such. It is most unlikely that they would give up their faith simply because a Protestant king sat on the throne. There were undoubtedly some conversions to Protestantism, but the numbers were almost certainly few. There is another explanation for the lack of religious bequests, however. There is evidence that testators were being dissuaded from making them. Probate was apparently being used as a means of enforcing conformity with the Edwardian changes in religion.

The temper of the Edwardian wills is more official than in previous reigns. Edward Vl's authority over the Church is constantly stressed in the wills, all of which contain professions of the Royal Supremacy, describing him as 'by the grace of God, King of England, France and Ireland, and immediately under God Supreme Head of the Church of England'. There are two exceptions to this rule, however, both from 1547. Neither the will belonging to William Shaw, dated 5 April 1547, nor that belonging to Simon English, carver, dated 28 October 1547, contain the profession of the Royal Supremacy. The next surviving will, belonging to Joan Griffin, dated 25 July 1548,

does. Its inclusion must have commenced some time after English's will was made, towards the end of 1547 or the beginning of 1548 perhaps, and is a clear indication that the Edwardian regime intended to exercise absolute authority in religious matters, including no doubt probate.[96]

Any control of what went into wills lay in the hands of the clergy. Testators could have been subjected to much pressure to omit certain sorts of bequests and phrases which suggested adherence to the old religion and would have had to be persistent not to be put off. Even if they did persist the priest might omit offending phrases and bequests from a will anyway in an effort to enforce conformity. That this sometimes happened is suggested by some bequests found in the wills which are identical to those found in the wills before Edward's reign except for the omission of the phrase 'for my soul' or 'to pray for me'. How many times was a bequest made for this purpose but the phrase omitted?

Testators were also being pressured into making certain sorts of bequests. The Injunctions of 1547 ordered that a chest be placed in every parish church into which were to be put all the gifts from the parishoners to the poor. These would then be distributed to the needy of the parish by six Key-keepers of the chest. Parishioners were to be persuaded to give their gifts to the poor box rather than have them distributed privately to the poor, and testators were singled out for special attention, probably because of the large number of bequests to the poor usually made by them. The Injunctions ordered that 'the parson, vicar and curate, shall diligently from time to time,

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96. LJRO, Shaw, William, 6/5/49; English, Simon, 17/4/53.

and specially when men make their testaments, call upon, exhort and move their neighbours to confer and give, as they may well spare to the said chest'. Moreover, the clergy were to persuade their parishioners to give to the poor that part of their 'substance' they would otherwise bestow 'upon pardons, pilgrimages, trentalles, decking of images, offering of candles, giving to friars, and upon other like blind devotions'. This order could affect bequests to parish churches, funeral arrangements and provision for masses which a testator might wish to make. Here is clear evidence that the clergy were instructed to interfere in the making of a will in order that it should conform to the Edwardian regime's religious policy.

There is also evidence that the clergy were coercing testators to adopt the new burial services after the introduction of the first Prayer Book. Some wills contain instructions for burial 'according to the King's Majesty's Book'. The first is only just after the Book's introduction. When Robert Hawtyn made his will on 20 March this year, the same month in which it was first published, he asked to have 'the service whiche is apointed for buryalls in the Kynges Maiestyes boke at the sayd churche of sayncte myghaels the same day as shalbe convenyentle thought good for the helthe of my sowle and the laude wyll & pleasure of almyghtie god'. Hawtyn still looked upon the funeral services, in part at least, as something good for the health of his soul, therefore, a concept which was denied by Protestantism. In 1551 John Castell directed that he was to be buried with 'suche sarvys done for me as ys nowe yeussed yn the Church'. Then, in 1552 both Ethelewe Price and John Somerfield requested burial 'according to the King's Majesty's proceedings'. The wording is so similar as to suggest that the same writer was employed by both of

them to draw up their wills. Both appear to be referring to the first Book of Common Prayer still, since their wills are dated to May and August 1552 respectively, before the second Book of Common Prayer of that year was to take effect in November. The identical wording of the requests in these last two wills suggests they were written by the same person, and it is likely, therefore, that here, and probably in the other cases as well, we have examples of priests exerting influence upon testators to conform to the first Prayer Book. Hawtyn allowed himself to be influenced, it seems, but the wording was his own.[97]

There is no way of establishing the degree to which the clergy interfered with what bequests testators made. If they had enforced the new regime's religious policy vigorously, the few bequests which were made would probably not have survived. This suggests that not all the clergy followed the official line. If religious preambles are indicative of the clergy's views rather than testator's, the Edwardian preambles suggest that many priests in Coventry remained devoted to the old religion, or at least undecided.[98] There is a marked swing away from traditional preambles in Edward VI's reign, as is to be expected, but there was no comprehensive shift to protestant preambles, and a high proportion were neutral. Out of a total of sixty nine wills, twenty four (35%) contain neutral preambles and thirty four (49%) Protestant. The Edwardian York wills also contain a high proportion of neutral preambles.[99] A neutral

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97. LJRO, Price, Ethelewe, 17/10/52.

98. See Appendix, Table 2.

99. D. M. Palliser, Tudor York. op. cit., 250 - 251.

preamble reflected neither Catholic nor Protestant sympathies, and it seems that many priests avoided committing themselves, or testators either way. This would have enabled some Catholic testators to express their beliefs through religious bequests in their wills.

It is not possible, therefore, to establish the religious beliefs and attitudes of the inhabitants of Coventry in Edward Vl's reign from the surviving wills, as has been done for the reigns of Henry Vll and Henry Vlll. The Edwardian dissolutions would have prevented Catholics from expressing their beliefs through traditional endowments and the official control of probate would almost certainly have stifled such expression further. Hence we cannot judge the extent to which Catholicism in Coventry survived through Edward's reign, and conversely, the extent to which Protestantism took hold. We do not know therefore, the situation when Mary succeeded to the throne.

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Mary's task, to reverse the events of the last twenty four years, was nothing short of Herculean, however, and an immediate return to the condition of the Church before Henry Vlll had begun all the trouble did not take place. It took most of the first two and a half years of Mary's reign to begin to undo what her father and brother had done. The Protestant changes of her brother's reign were at once repealed in 1553. The following year the Henrician Reformation was repealed. The same act safeguarded the changes in landownership brought about by the dissolution of the monasteries and the guilds and chantries, which could probably never be replaced. Not until the end of 1555 was Catholicism, as far as it was possible, restored by the decrees of the synod of clergy convened by Pole. The Coventry

wills reflect this situation, and there are few before 1556 which contain the sorts of religious bequests commonly found in them before 1547.

There were bequests from only two testators to the parish churches before 1556. In 1554 Richard Coly, shearman, bequeathed 4d. 'to every awtar in the Trinete Churche that masse is seide at', and in 1555 Joan Clowis, widow, bequeathed 12d. to the high altar of St. Michael's and 4d each to the altars of Our Lady and St. Katherine in the same church. This lack of bequests reflects the need for time to restore the parish churches to their pre-Edwardian condition, as all that had been sold had to be replaced and all that had been destroyed rebuilt. Not until 1556 had any real progress been made. The Cappers' accounts for this year show that 9s.4d. was paid 'for payntyng off 16 yards in that chappell at 4d. the yarde', an obvious reference to the erasing of the words of Scripture which had been painted on church walls. Those in the Girdlers' chapel were taken from Philippians. There is evidence that things sold in Edward's reign to citizens were now reappearing in Mary's, perhaps having been entrusted to peoples' care for a future restoration. The Drapers' accounts for 1556 state that 4d. was paid for 'beryng the orgayne from master nethermyll'. The accounts for 1554 list debts to the craft consisting of £4 from John Nethermyll 'ffor a payre of orgaynes' and £3 6s.8d. 'ffor a challys'. Since the organs were being restored to the chapel, it seems that Nethermyll had been merely looking after them, or had perhaps re-sold them to his craft upon Mary's accession.[100]

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100. LJRO, Coly, Richard, 14/10/55; Clowis, Joan, 31/7/57; Sharpe, 31 CRO, Drapers Access. 154 (Daffern), f 32.

There is considerable evidence of the restoration of the parish churches from the wills. In 1557 John a Layne bequeathed 5s. 'thowards the Reparacon of the Smythes Autur in St Mychells Cherche'. The following year William Hyndman, a grasier who had been mayor in 1553, bequeathed 12d to Our Lady's chapel in Holy Trinity 'towards ye Reparyng of the alter ther', and promised a further 5s. within twelve-months of his death if the altar was by then completed.[101] It appears from the pattern of bequests, however, that only a few of the previously numerous side-chapels and altars in the parish churches were re-built. From 1556 testators begin to make bequests to chapels and altars in the churches, but there are a large number of altars which were in the church prior to 1547 that receive no bequests.[102] This is presumably because the chapels and altars were not restored in Mary's reign. Thus in St. Michael's the only chapels and altars to receive bequests were the high altar, the Jesus altar, Our Lady's altar, St. Katherine's altar, the Smiths' altar, of course, and the Cappers' chapel. No other chapels or altars received bequests. It seems that in Holy Trinity the high altar, the Jesus altar and Our Lady's altar were the only ones restored in Mary's reign.

Before the restoration of the parish churches to their pre-1547 condition, few testators requested burial in them. In 1553 three testators requested burial in their parish church, one requested burial in his parish church or churchyard, one in the churchyard and one expressed no preference. Two of the first three requests suggest that the testators were Protestants. Henry Lyngham, baker, whose

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101. LJRO, Layne, John a, 7/2/57; Hindman, William, 1/3/97, LB, 805.

102. See Appendix, Tables 6 - 16 and 19 - 28.

name appears on the lists of council members during Edward VI's reign, requested burial 'in the Chawncelle of the parishe churche of the glorious Trinete in Coventre above the Communyon Table'. William Saunders, a capper, and mayor in 1549, requested burial in St.Michael's church 'in the bodie of the same churche before the pulpitt there'. In 1554 six out of the seven testators whose wills survive requested burial in the churchyards of their parish churches. In 1555 one testator requested burial in her parish church, the other in the churchyard of his. In 1556 requests appear for burial in the side-chapels and before altars and images. One testator requested burial in a chapel, three in the church, and six in the churchyard. In 1557 one testator requested burial in a chapel, six in their parish churches, nineteen in the churchyards and four expressed no preference. In 1558 two testators requested burial before altars: William Hyndman requested burial in Holy Trinity 'in the boddye of ye said Churche A gaynst Jesus alter', and Agnes Atkins, widow, requested burial 'in the queer beffore the hygh altar' of St. Michael's. Two testators asked for burial in chapels, eleven in their parish church, two in their church or churchyard, twelve in the churchyards and two expressed no preference.[103]

In the first years of Mary's reign there were practically no bequests for additional funeral arrangements. The only example before 1556 is that of Joan Brewer, who gave 6s.8d. to be dealt to the poor the day of her burial in 1554.[104] From 1557 bequests for

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103. LJRO, Lyngham, Henry, 27/2/57; Saunders, William, 19/4/54, LB, 789; LJRO, Atkins, Agnes, 23/11/58.

104. LJRO, Brewer, Joan, 29/4/55.

additional priests and clerks, etc., to perform the funeral services appear in the wills once again. From 1556 bequests to the poor on the day of burial are found again. There are no bequests to the poor to carry torches or tapers, however, and otherwise only one bequest for additional tapers in 1558. There were no requests for additional peals of bells.[105]

Testators did not begin to make provision for their souls until 1557. There are examples of three testators entrusting their executors and overseers with making what provision they saw fit, two testators provided for obits and one for a stipendiary priest. There were no bequests for trentals. The only indication of support for intercession before this time is found in the will of John Hall, a saddler, in 1553. He attached a reversionary clause to property he bequeathed his wife, with remainder to his daughter if she married, and other property outright to his daughter if she died without heirs lawfully begotten, that it was to be sold and the money distributed to the poor 'for my soull & all Christen sowlles'.[106]

Surprisingly, there are a few Marian wills which contain professions of the Royal Supremacy. There are eleven examples out of a total of one hundred and six surviving wills for Mary's reign: three in 1553, one in 1556, four in 1557 and three in 1558[107]. Mary, of course, would not use her title of Supreme Head, but instead adopted

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105. See Appendix, Tables 42, 51, 45, 44.
106. LJRO, Hall, John, 16/10/53.
107. LJRO, Lyngham, Henry, 27/2/57; Saunders, William, 19/4/54; Smythe, John, 9/4/54; Thecker, John, 4/10/58; Priest, Thomas, 12/10/57; Farmer, Thomas, 10/11/57; Bowkley, Roger, 7/2/57; Griffin, John, 28/11/58; Warner, Richard, 4/10/58; Byrde, John, 4/10/58; Turner Richard, 28/11/58.

the subterfuge of replacing it with the non-committal 'etc.'. With two exceptions, both in 1553, all the professions of the Royal Supremacy found in the Marian wills adopt this latter form. What the inclusion of such a profession in a will indicates is not clear. It may have been used by the testator as a means of expressing his support for the English Reformation. The two testators whose wills contain a full profession of the Royal Supremacy can be identified through other evidence in the body of their wills as Protestants. In many cases there is no supporting evidence in the body of the wills to suggest this. Indeed, in some cases evidence found in the body of wills suggests the testators held Catholic beliefs. It is possible that the profession of the Royal Supremacy was included in the will by the writer, usually a member of the clergy, and that it reflects his beliefs rather than those of the testator. In this case such a profession indicates that Protestant clergy were still active in the city.

There is evidence that the Catholic clergy, like the Protestant, brought pressure to bear on testators in the matter of funeral services. There are several requests by testators to be buried with the Catholic funeral services of dirge and requiem mass. In 1554 William Ellat, weaver, requested 'to have dorge song for my solle and All chrystyn solls' and Joan Brewer requested 'to have dyrge and masse for my soule and all xpen soules the daye of my buriall'. In 1555 Joan Clowis requested 'that they be down ffor me byothe mase & dorghe'. In 1557 Thomas Priest, butcher, requested 'to be brought home with dyrge And masse', Joan Dayde requested 'to have mase & dorghe' and her husband Robert Dayde also requested 'to have mas & dorghe'. Such requests are to be distinguished from bequests for additional priests and clerks. Then testators were stating how many priests and clerks

they wished to perform the services which they took for granted. Now testators were asking to have the services in the first place. There is a strong possibility, however, that these requests were not made by the testators themselves, but were included in their wills by Catholic priests who probably wrote them, and are, therefore, another instance of clerical influence on the writing of wills. This is strongly suggested by the fact that the wills of Joan and Robert Dayde were clearly written by the same person.[108]

The evidence of the Marian wills shows that the inhabitants of Coventry did not immediately revert to Catholicism with the accession of Mary. Perhaps it is not to be expected that they should have done, since some time was necessary to restore what had been swept away. Even by the end of Mary's reign, however, there does not seem to have been a widespread return to Catholicism, if the religious bequests found in the wills are any indication. It is possible that there had not been enough time to establish Catholicism again properly in Mary's short reign. It was only from 1556 that the restoration really got under way. The lack of bequests may reflect the fact that it had not really taken hold by the end of Mary's reign. But seventeen years of unremitting spoliation by the Crown would have made many people wary.

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108. LJRO, Ellat, William, 9/4/54; Brewer, Joan, 29/4/55; Clowis Joan, 31/7/57; Priest, Thomas, 12/10/57; Deades, Joan, 10/7/57; Dayde, Robert, 10/7/57.

CHAPTER III

Popular Religion and Culture

At the heart of any community before the Reformation lay the daily, weekly and yearly round of religious observances, ceremonies and customs. Some observances were universal: the liturgy of the Church and the sequence of festivals represented in most cases the focus of communal activity, but others were peculiar to indiviual communities. Of those latter, some might be regional, or variations on a widely, perhaps universally, observed custom. Others were based on local myths and legends and the history of the community itself. Together they formed the community's outward expression of itself. During the middle and later years of the sixteenth century these observances were strongly attacked, and there occurred a more abrupt break with the past than ever before, when specific customs and practises were abolished on a large scale or changed beyond recognition. This side to the Reformation is directly comparable to the process of dissolving and dismantling the Catholic faith by sweeping away religious houses, guilds and chantries. It was a destructive process that has received much less attention, however, perhaps because it is something for which the evidence is often scanty and at best incomplete. But because these observances and customs were an integral part of every day life, the impact of the Reformation upon this aspect of everyday life was probably felt all the more keenly by people.

To begin with we will look at the regular pattern of religious observance -beginning with the sacrifice of the mass, which was central

to religious life before the Reformation. No source for Coventry states categorically what the services were in the churches and chapels in the city, but it is certain from numerous references that at least one daily mass was celebrated in all of them. Mass in both parish churches seems to have been celebrated some time after 7 a.m. The deacon of Holy Trinity was required to open the church doors at 6 a.m. and deliver to the priest who was to sing the mass a book, a chalice and vestments. The second deacon was to be at the church at 6.30 a.m. and ring the bells to summon the people to matins. The full daily office appears to have been said in Holy Trinity. Matins was probably some time after 7 a.m. if indications as to when it was celebrated in St. Michael's are anything to go by. The services in both parish churches were probably the same. It seems that the last bell for matins was ring at 7 a.m. After matins mass was sung in Holy Trinity in the choir. The bells were rung again by the deacon at 3 p.m. to summon the people to vespers or evensong. There was probably a second bell at 3.30 p.m. and evensong at 4 p.m. [1]. It is not known when mass was celebrated elsewhere in the city. The full daily office, probably according to the above timetable, would have been said in the monastic and friary churches. We also know that mass was celebrated at 4 a.m. in St. John's church belonging to Trinity Guild[2].

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1. Taken from the offices of the first and second deacons of Holy Trinity printed in T. Sharpe, Illustrative Papers on the History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry ... (Birmingham 1871), 122-24.

2. CRO, Access. 24, f92.

In addition there were a number of other masses celebrated each day or week. Two priests of Corpus Christi Guild, one in each of the parish churches, celebrated Our Lady Mass each day, which masses had been established in 1392[3]. When instituted Trinity Guild had been responsible for the mass in St. Michael's and Corpus Christi Guild for the mass in Holy Trinity. The accounts of Corpus Christi Guild for 1495 state that the master of the guild was charged with money received of the wardens of Our Lady's chapel in St. Michael's to the value of 20s a year, 'wyche was geffyn for to lycens the prist of this gyld to syng owr lady mass for a yere', so it seems that by this time Corpus Christi Guild had taken responsibility for both masses[4]. A Jesus mass was celebrated once a week in each parish church, since 1465 in the case of St. Michael's and 1470 in the case of Holy Trinity. That in the former was celebrated on Fridays, though it is not known when the latter was said[5]. There are also references to other masses celebrated on a regular basis in one or other of the churches in the city. In 1518 Thomas Ford bequeathed a close in Berkswell to 'find' St. Anthony's Mass in St. Michael's. This is the only reference and so it is not known whether the mass had been newly instituted or was of some years standing[6].

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3. Sharpe, op. cit. 25,81

4. CRO, A6, f 69

5. See below, I29; F. Bliss Burbidge, Old Coventry and Lady Godiva: Being Some Flowers of Coventry History. (Birmingham n.d.), 220, 221.

6. PCC, 14 Ayloffe.

Similarly, there is a reference to a Rood Mass in a rental of Trinity Guild property for the year 1532-33, which concerns a house in Little Park Street given to 'hyme yt helpeth the Rood masse prist to synge'[7]. No indication is given as to where this mass was sung or when it was first begun. And to these specific masses must be added those 'private' masses celebrated in all the churches in the city for the souls of the dead, which includes some of those listed above, that were said or sung by chantry priests, stipendiary priests, at obits, etc, and those celebrated by the guild and craft priests for the brethren and sisters of their associations.

Despite the number of masses celebrated in the city each day, it is unlikely that more than a small section of the population would have attended them during the week. Those who did would probably have been from the wealthy upper classes, while the humbler sort would have been employed at work. The timing of the working day in Coventry shows this to have been the case. The normal day began with the ringing of the day-bells in the parish churches. The time at which they were rung is nowhere stated, but the day-bell in St. John's Bablake was rung at 4 a.m. and it can be assumed that it was the same in the parish churches. For most of the inhabitants work started at 6 a.m. and extended for between twelve and fourteen hours, depending on occupation and the time of the year. The second deacon of Holy Trinity sang curfew at 8 p.m., his counterpart in St. Michael's presumably doing the same, and the clerks of both parish

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7. G. Templeman (ed.), The Records of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, St. Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Katherine of Coventry, (Dugdale Society, XIX, 1944), 114.

churches rang curfew. The timing of the working day prevented most citizens attending church on these days, therefore, and they would have been able to attend church only on Sundays and holidays[8], although since mass was celebrated daily in Bablake church at 4 a.m. it would have been possible for some to attend before going to work if they wished[9].

By contrast, the mayor's day did not begin until 7 a.m. when he was escorted to church, St. Michael's, by his officers. However, it seems that even they often failed to attend him because of business, for in 1518 the officers were ordered to attend the mayor or be fined. Every officer was to be ready each working day at the mayor's house 'by vii of the clok in the mornyng' to escort him to church. If any had business to conduct while the mayor was at church he was required 'to shewe of his departyng to Maister Meire or to the sordeberer & to harkyn of his goyng frome church, & bring hym home to his house'. The same procedure was followed if any officers wanted to be absent when the mayor attended evensong. Those who did not obtain permission were fined 1d. Similarly, the officers were to escort the mayor to the Jesus Mass on Fridays, and afterwards to the market to inspect the

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8. C.V. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a City, Coventry and the Urban Crisis of the Late Middle Ages (CUP, 1979), 74-6.

9. C. Haigh, Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire, (Cambridge, 1975), 64, remarks that the inhabitants of Liverpool complained that they could not attend mass daily, because of their work. The priest of St. John's altar was instructed to provide an early mass in order that all labourers and 'well-disposed people' could do so. There is nothing to suggest that the early mass at Bablake was begun for this reason but it would explain the extraordinarily early hour at which it was celebrated.

fish laid out for sale there on this fish-eating day, after which they were to escort him home, whereupon they could depart to go about their own business. For being absent on Fridays the fine was increased to 2d. On Sundays and holidays the officers were to be at the mayor's house 'before the last pele be all rongen to matens or evensong', upon pain of a fine also of 2d[10].

Attendance at church on Sundays was regulated to a large extent by the crafts. Certainly the attendance of the crafts fellowships, consisting of the masters and their wives, journeymen and apprentices, was strictly governed by them, but though the ordinances were confined to these sections of the community they affected the whole population of the city. Work finished on Saturday afternoons and could not begin again until after evensong on a Sunday at the earliest, and only then with special licence. For example, the Tilers ordered that 'no man of the Crafts worcke longur than tylle on owre afternoon of Satturddayes', upon pain of 12d. fine[11]. No work was permitted at all on Sundays. The Bakers ordered that 'no persone of the same fellowshippe shall bake any kynde of breade upon any Sondaye throughout the yere, without the lycence of the Master of the companye. and that uppon some specyall consyeracon. And that none of them shall carrye or cause to be carryed any breade into the countrey upon any Sondaye without lyke lycence', upon pain of a fine of 3s. 4d. The Cordwainers ordered its fellowship 'not to open shop windows or offer wares to

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10. LB, 662.

11. Tilers, Reader, c7, f 217.

sale before or in time of any divine service or sermon' upon pain of a similar fine. The Fullers directed that 'no persone or persones of the same fellowship, eyther of the Cytie or of the contrey shalbe permytted to fetche, or carry unto, or owt of his or ther handes, or custodie, any clothe upon the sabothe day (unless it be after Evenynge prayer)' upon pain of a fine of 6s. 8d[12].

The crafts and the corporation saw to it that no work was done on a Sunday, but this did not necessarily mean that all attended church. The crafts recognised this fact and fined members of their fellowships who did not attend, whatever the reason. The Drapers imposed a fine of 12d. and the Cordwainers one of 4d. Only those with a legitimate reason for non-attendance, such as sickness, lawful business or a leave of absence, were excused attendance. The crafts employed 'seat-keepers', part of whose job was to check attendance, and in the case of the Cordwainers 1d. of the fine went to the seat-keepers of the craft for 'their vigilente overlokynge'. Among the craft fellowships, therefore, church attendance on a Sunday was mandatory, and great pains were taken to ensure that all who were supposed to attend did[13].

The reason for this was bound up with the status and public image of the crafts. All craft fellowships were expected to attend in their liveries, and sit in church in places for them, whether in

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12. Bakers, CRO, Access 8, f5, Cordwainers, Access, 14, f12; Fullers, Reader, C7., f12.

13. Drapers, Reader, C7., f93, Cordwainers, CRO, Access, 14, f7.

their craft chapel or in the body of the church, according to the rule of their craft. In the case of the Cordwainers, who sat in the body of St. Michael's in three seats, the ordinances stated that, 'every man beinge free of the sayde fellewschippe...shall decently come every Sondaye into their seates...the younger men to place themselves in the nethermoste seate, everie man accordinge to his auncientes, and iff there be not sufficient rowme for them in that seate, then to place suche as want rowme there in the mydle seate'. The ordinances of the Drapers, who had Our Lady's chapel in St. Michael's, directed that, 'Every freeman of the Company, dwelling in the City (excepte suche as have bene Mayors) shall sit in the Drapers Chapel every Sabbath day at morninge prayer when there is warning given by the Master and Wardens and their apprentices to sit before them'. The exceptions to this, as the ordinance pointed out, were those members of the craft who had been mayors. Ex-mayors sat with the mayor, his officers and aldermen towards the east end of St. Michael's nearest to the high altar and pulpit (It seems that the mayor always attended St. Michael's on Sundays). The Drapers sought to make clear by this act the fact that the craft had supplied more than its fair share of mayors of the city[14].

The mayor and his officers and the aldermen attended in their scarlet gowns, and because it was a Sunday they wore over the top of their gowns a 'velvet tippet', a garment which covered the shoulders and fell some distance down the front. The Drapers fellowship was directed to attend in the draft livery, comprising 'a gown of sad

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14. Cordwainers, CRO, Access. 14, f5; Drapers, loc. cit.

pewke, tawne otherall off browne blewe whych be nere of one color & a hode the on halfe tawne or pewke & the other halfe skarlet of the seid hode'. The ordinance went on to say, 'but suche as have bene maiors shalle then wear at Churche assemblies & buryalls ther velvet Typpets'. Therefore, on a Sunday, when the community hierarchy was defined for all to see, the Drapers would stand out clearly as a senior craft[15].

It was important for a craft to have an area assigned to it in one of the parish churches in which to hear divine service on Sundays commensurate with its wealth and the status which that brought with it. The Mercers and Drapers, being the two most senior crafts in Coventry, held the chapels nearest to the high altar and therefore the sacrament; the Drapers' chapel was situated on the northside of the chancel and the Mercers' on the southside inside the Rood screen[16]. The closer a craft fellowship sat to the sacrament the greater was its status. Crafts which did not have a place in their parish church made strenuous efforts to obtain one. This is clearly shown in the case of the Cappers, who enjoyed great prosperity in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Requiring the trappings of a successful craft, the Cappers made every effort to secure a space in St. Michael's, and in 1531 they were fortunate enough to be able to associate with the Cardmakers and Saddlers (who had declined in prosperity by this time). When the association was approved it was stated that it had

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15. Drapers, op. cit. f92.

16. F.W. Woodhouse, The Churches of Coventry. A Short History of the City and its Medieval Remains, (1909), 66, 103.

been allowed 'for asmoch as the company, feliship, And Craft of Cappers within this Citie, now beyng nomber meny welthy and honest persones, & have maid dyuers tymes sute & request unto the Meire & his brethern, the aldermen of this Citie, to have a certeyn place to theme assigned & lymyted, as dyuers others Craftes have, to sitt together in ther seid parishe Churche to here ther dyvyne service & bere suche charges for the same as by Maister Meir & his brethern, the Aldermen, shal-be assigned'. The Cappers were, therefore, permitted to be 'associat, Joyned, & accompanyed with the seid Craftes of Cardmakers & Sadelers in the gouernaunce, reparying & meynteynyng of & in the seid Chappell, named St. Thomas Chappell, & of the ornamentes & lightes of the same'. Most important, however, was the final clause, which stated that the Cappers craft was 'to femyliarlie and louynglie accompany & sitt together in the said Chappell with the seid compeny and craft of Cardmakers & Sadelers to here ther divyne seruice'. The Cappers finally had their own space in the church[17].

This is not the end of the story, for the Cardmakers and Saddlers continued to decline as a craft, and on 8 January 1537 they surrendered their chapel to the mayor, aldermen, bailiffs and commonalty of the city with all ornaments, etc. belonging thereto. The chapel was subsequently granted to the Cappers to hold as its own, but the Cardmakers and Saddlers were reserved the right to have some of their membership sit in the chapel on Sundays. The Cappers obtained the chapel on the understanding that 'convenyent sittyng

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17. LB. 707-10.

rome in the said Chappell for foure persones of the said Craftes of Cardmakers & Saddlers to Here the Dy yne seruice at all times'. The exact situation of the seats was also spelt out. They were to be 'vnder the nether wyndowe on the south side of the said Chappell betwene the Images of the Trinitie & saynt Sebastiane'. The Cardmakers and Saddlers were as jealous of maintaining their position as the Cappers were of enhancing theirs[18].

We do not know where all the craft fellowships sat in church, but their placing probably reflected the status of the craft in the city. Those which maintained chapels obviously sat in them, but those which had seats are difficult to place. However, some idea may be had from requests by testators to be buried in their parish church where they were 'accustomed' to sit. In 1531 Elizabeth Sutton, whose first husband, Thomas Reynolds, was a fuller, requested burial in St. Michael's 'at the Walkers sete end in the body of the church'. In 1538 Thomas Kebull, a shermen, requested burial in St. Michael's 'in the body of the sayd Churche at ye set wher yt I was Costom to knell'. In 1544 Nicholas Launt, also a shermen, requested burial in the same church 'in the body of the sayd chorch before the tayllyrs & Shermens setes ther at I was a Costom to Kneyell'. Though the Shermen and Tailors owned their own chapel at Gosford Gate, it seems they attended St. Michael's on Sundays. In the same year Robert Smith, skinner, requested burial in St. Michael's 'in the mydell of the body of ye said church at ye skynars seate end'. As regards Holy

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18. LB, 726; R.W. Ingram, Records of Early English Drama: Coventry, (MUP, 1981), 145.

Trinity, in 1516 John Tedde, a grasier, requested burial in this church 'before my seate by hynde the fount by the chappell of all Hallows'. In 1519 Nicholas Burwey requested burial in Holy Trinity 'in the fourth yle before the table of the Trynitie'[19]. These sorts of bequests are too few to be of use in identifying where crafts sat, although the fact that the Shermen and Tailors sat in St. Michael's is significant, and the presence of this craft in St. Michael's begs the question as to whether or not the Weavers attended one of the parish churches on Sundays. This information is useful, therefore, in identifying which crafts sat in which churches, and it will be evident that the seating conforms to the occupational biases of city. Moreover, it also indicates that seats were in Holy Trinity by 1516. Since both parish churches tended to copy the innovations of each other, it can be assumed that seats were also installed in St. Michael's by this time.

The pre-Reformation Church did not permit the laity to take an active part in the mass, on Sundays or any other day. It was conducted by the priest alone in a ritual language few could understand, partly out of sight behind the rood screen. But the people were probably not ignorant of what was going on. They would have known what the priest was doing on the alter: that he was making sacrifice and satisfaction for the living and the dead, and that he would actually make Christ present in the Host before consuming it. They knew that the mass

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19. LJRO, Register of Wills, B/C/10; Kebul, Thomas, 12/3/39. Launt, Nicholas, 27/4/47; Smith, Robert, 23/3/44; Register of Wills, B/C/10, PCC 27 Aylotte.

celebrated and made present the reconciliation of God and man from which any amount of good might follow in this world and the next. The climax of the congregation's act of worship was to adore the consecrated elements at the elevation. The people probably did not feel excluded from the mass, for, though they had not communicated, (something which they did rarely, usually only at Easter) the communitarian aspect was preserved in the kissing of the Pax, an image of Christ which was brought round the congregation. And at the end of the mass Holy Bread was distributed to the congregation. If communion was infrequent, the symbolism of actively sharing bread and becoming one was affirmed. It may have been a poor substitute for receiving the eucharist, but it was a custom that mattered.

Both St. Michael's and Holy Trinity were exceptionally large for parish churches, but with the side aisles taken up with craft chapels and permanent seats allocated to other crafts there would have been problems of space. Even if this had not been the case, it is unlikely that the two parish churches on their own would have been able to accommodate all the inhabitants of the city, some six to seven thousand, at the same time. Those unable to get into one of the parish churches, mainly the poorer inhabitants, resorted to the friary and guild churches to hear divine service on Sundays. It is probable that the cathedral was also pressed into service. At least one of the several chapels outside the city walls was used by the citizens. The Henrician chantry commissioners noted that the Shermen and Tailors chapel of St. George stood well out of the centre of the city, and that 'many people of the Suburbys as within the

same Cytye beyng very pore ffolk and the Rather to Avoyde yll eyres And the presse of them do Comenly use the resorte to the same Chapell to here messe and other dyvyne servyce, And not to the parishe Churche'[20]. The citizens were not deprived of the ability to hear divine service, therefore, although they could not hear it in their parish church.

At the end of the mass the Holy Bread was distributed to the congregations in each parish church. In Holy Trinity it was the deacon who did this. He was to 'se ye woly cake, every sonday, be kyt a quordyng for every man's degre, and schall beyr ye woly bred to serve ye pepull, in ye northe syde off ye churche'. The second deacon of Holy Trinity was responsible for the south side of the church. He was to see 'ye woly bred be drawlte every sonday, on ye sowthe syde off ye churche, every man in hys degre'[21]. An identical system was doubtless operated in St. Michael's. But what of the inhabitants who attended one of the friary churches or those belonging to the monasteries and guilds, or to the several chapels elsewhere in the city? When did they receive the Holy Bread? It is not clear but there is a strong possibility that it was distributed to them when it was taken round the city after mass had been said. This is suggested by an ordinance of 1539, which laid down the route to be taken by the city seargeants declaring the watch. It stated, 'Frome-hensfurthe the seriauntes that shall warne the comen watche of this Citie shall furst begyn to warne the said watche at seynt Margettes Chappell & kepe the southe side of the Streit, and so to go throughout the Citie

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20. E301/31, f6.

21. Sharpe, loc. cit.

in euery Striet as the holie Cake goith. And that the Constable of the warde shall go euery nyght with the seriaunt to warne the watche & shall have for his labour 2d'. The Holy Bread was taken through the city streets after mass on Sundays, therefore, and distributed to those inhabitants who had not received it in either parish church outside their houses. In this way the communal aspect of the mass was preserved and all citizens shared bread and were 'made one'. The bread was not distributed in the churches belonging to the religious houses and the guilds or in the various chapels, and in this way the parish identity was maintained[22].

The parish churches remained at the centre of religious life in Coventry in every way, although the parishes were subdivided into wards for ease of administration, and both St. Michael's and Holy Trinity maintained extensive staffs of priests, deacons, clerks, etc. Much of this has to be inferred from the instructions given to the deacons of Holy Trinity however, in which there are a number of references to the deacons and priests of individual wards. For example, the duties of the first deacon included finding 'a dekyn' to read the gospel at high mass every Sunday and holy day. He was to provide holy water 'for hys prieste', every Sonday, and then,

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22. LB 738-39. J. Bossy, 'The Mass as a Social Institution 1200-1700', Past and Present, 100, (1983), 54-7, stresses the importance of the Pax. J.J. Scarisbrick, The Reformation and the English People, (Oxford, 1984), 44, thinks the holy bread was more significant in this respect. Owing to the prevailing circumstances at Coventry the holy bread was of special significance to the citizens, but circumstances elsewhere may have been different.

every Sunday take holy water to every house in 'hys warde'. An indication that priests were also appointed to minister to the needs of the inhabitants in certain wards it given in the direct to the first deacon who was to accompany his priest when he visited the sick, 'in hys ward', or go in his place. The first deacon was also to accompany the body of anyone who died 'in hys ward' to church, as was the second deacon. It seems therefore, that a first and second deacon were assigned to each ward with a priest. This system probably evolved to maintain the same relationship between parish church and parishioner as existed in towns and cities elsewhere with several parish churches[23].

One of the results of the city having only two parish churches was that the parochial unit was not important administratively. In other large towns and cities with several or many parishes, the parish gave the inhabitants their sense of identity and community. In Coventry the parishes were too vast to fulfil this function, which was taken over by the ten wards of the city. They were the units for tax collection, the election of ale-tasters (usually four to a ward), the conduit-keepers (where relevant) to oversee the city's water supply, and the election of constables (usually six, but the number varied) under the supervision of an alderman. The wards probably also furnished the watches, and the lane ends in each had chains hanging ready to control any riots. The wards also claimed a popular voice in the oversight of the city's common lands.

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23. Sharpe, loc. cit.

The 'good myndes' consulted when any changes were planned concerning them, such as enclosure, were selected on a ward basis. Most of the social matters which were organised on a parish basis elsewhere were organised on a ward basis in Coventry[24].

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As well as attending church regularly on Sundays, during the year the inhabitants of Coventry, as elsewhere, observed the sequence of religious festivals whose purpose was to present before them the story of Christ's birth, life, death and resurrection. These festivals were an outward expression of the doctrine and central to the official life of the Church. Evidence of the way in which they were celebrated at Coventry is scanty, however, and it is impossible to build up the same detailed picture of the Church year in Coventry as has been constructed of church attendance on Sundays in the city.

The most striking thing about the festivals was that a large part of their content was dramatised, the intention being to give the people a visual representation of the events they were celebrating or commemorating. This emphasis on the visual was the best means of conveying the message to a population the vast majority of which were uneducated. The religious year began with Advent - the time of preparation for the coming of Christ. Christ's birth was celebrated on Christmas Day, perhaps with some representation of the Nativity. The ensuing twelve days of Christmas recalled other events in the early life of Christ, such as the feast of Holy

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24. Phythian-Adams, op. cit. 158-59.

Innocents, which commenorated the massacre of the children by Herod. Also known as the feast of the boy-bishop, a boy was dressed up in religious garb, and with other children in attendance performed certain ceremonies, concluding with a sermon in which the attending congregation were exhorted to adopt the virtues of children which were most evident in the Child Jesus[25]. Epiphany, or Twelfth Day, may also have been given special consideration, perhaps with a visual representation of the three kings visiting the infant Jesus. Hardly had the Christmas celebrations been completed then a few weeks later, on 2 February, the Purification of the Virgin, known as Candlemas Day, was kept. On this day churches everywhere would have been ablaze with many candles. There was probably a procession with lighted candles as well.

The Easter celebrations were intended to present before the people the story of Christ's death, beginning with Shrove Tuesday, which was observed to remind people that they were to prepare themselves for the weeks of Lenten fast. Lent began on the following day: Ash Wednesday, when ashes were sprinkled on the heads of the people to remind them they were dust and to dust would return. On this day also began the strict fast for Lent, which had to be observed on all days except Sundays; and then no meat was permitted. And in this period any unnecessary and distracting business was as far as possible to be avoided. From the evening before the first Sunday of Lent until the Thursday

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25. See also below, I60-62

before Easter the Lenten Curtain was hung in the parish churches between the chancel and the nave. This represented the prophecy of Christ's Passion which remained hidden and unknown until this time. It was drawn back during the last three days of Holy Week, for on these three days Christ suffered openly upon the cross. On the first Monday of Lent all crucifixes were covered until the eve of Easter.

The dramatic ceremonies of Holy Week began with Palm Sunday. On this day 'palms' were distributed to the people to signify Christ's entry into Jerusalem. The Lenten curtain was drawn aside on procession days in Lent, and Palm Sunday being one of these, the curtain was drawn back to remind people that Christ's death on the cross for them was drawing near. Shere or Maundy Thursday commemorated the institution of the sacrament of the Last Supper. This day was also marked with a procession. The day was known as Shere Thursday at Coventry: the accounts of Trinity Guild list payments for crossbearers and torchbearers for a procession on 'Shire Thursday'[26]. On Good Friday the chief ceremony was the veneration of the cross, or 'creeping to the cross' as it was more usually known, in honour of Christ's death for man's sins. Holy Saturday was marked by the kindling of hallowed fire, which was used to light the Paschal Candle, the symbol of the risen Christ. On Easter Sunday all the people received Holy Communion, the people having confessed during Lent. The other feature of

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26. B. Poole, Coventry: its History and Antiquities, (London and Coventry, 1870), 211.

the day was the enactment of the resurrection from the Easter Sepulchure. A crucifix was placed in a structure representing Christ's sepulchure, which was raised out of it on this day, and, following a procession, was deposited on the high altar until Ascension Day.

The observance of the major festivals in the Church year was regulated by the crafts in the same way as they regulated church attendance on Sundays. An obvious pre-Reformation ruling in a later sixteenth-century revision of the Cardmakers' ordinances stated that, 'no person of the fellowshipp, that is to saye, no Maister nor his wife, journeyman nor prentiz, do frequent or use any of these poynts followinge, that is to saye, Cutinge, prickynge, doublynge, Crookinge nor Settinge, within the xii dayes at Christmas neyther on any vygill Even after the same houre, up on the payne of syx shyllyngs eyght pence at every default, neyther shall they woorke at any of the poynts specyfyed in Easter Weeke neither Whitsune week, uppon the payne aforesaide'. The Cardmakers' ordinance is the best surviving example of a craft regulating the Church year but there are other less elaborate references in other sets of ordinances. The Tilers' ordinance in this regard has already been mentioned. The Weavers ordered that, 'no weyver within Couentre worke in ye brode lome on vigill Saturdays at after none ne on the Evenes of our blessyd lady nor ytt in the narowe lome excepte yt he may fall cease his worke by thre of ye Clocke next folowyng', upon pain of a fine of 3s. 4d. These ordinances were probably representative of local practice. If crafts did not

include regulations to this effect in their ordinances it does not mean that their members did not observe the Church year[27]. It is to be noted, however, that crafts were most keen to regulate attendance on those occasions when they were on public view[28].

The purpose of the Church year was to present before the people the major events in Christ's life. The emphasis was on one particular event: the Crucifixion and Christ's sacrifice for man. The rood with its crucifix at its centre was the most common decoration found in churches, and el borate celeb Holy Rood Day on 14 September each year. At Coventry the latter was marked by a procession. Elsewhere in the city other indications are found of this emphasis, such as the Rood Mass celebrated in St. Michael's church. There was a Holy Rood chapel in Holy Trinity, which was probably the centre of the celebrations in this church on Holy Rood Day, and there was, of course, another Rood chapel adjoining the Greyfriars church. This privately founded chapel of the Pysford family, built about 1520, most ably reflects this emphasis in popular religion.

Henry P ford died in 1525 he directed his body to be buried in the churchyard of the friary before the chapel. He requested, in a short a time was possible after his death, 'fyve trentalls in honour of Crists fyve principall wounds and they to be saide in

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27. Cardmakers, Reader, c7., f95; Weavers, CRO, Access, 34/1, f4.

28. See below, I53-57.

fyve dayes honouring every day oon of the fyve pryncipall wounds and the said prests to pray to almighty god for me for the love that he bought to all mankyne when he suffered death on the Rode to have mercy on me and make me oon of his electe and chosyn servants in hevyn'. Moreover, in honour of Christ's Five Wounds Pysford ordered 'that there be bought a table or braunth presenting the tokyns of the fyve wounds of our lorde of the value of 30s or 40s'. and gave £40 to be bestowed 'aboute the said Chapell'. Few went to the lengths of the Pysford family, but some other testators did request five masses of the five wounds, such as William Shuckborough in 1514 and Thomas Herynge in 1536[29].

An emphasis on Christ is found elsewhere in the popular religion of the citizens. The Shearmen and Tailors was a combined craft guild dedicated to the Nativity, which was sometimes referred to as the Guild of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ's birth was something which was celebrated in a minor key compared with his death, and even at this feast the emphasis was probably on the child Jesus as the future victim of the Passion[30]. This is reflected in the feast of Holy Innocents, which was as well-marked a feast as the Nativity itself. There was also a confraternity of Jesus in Coventry. Its devotions centred around the Jesus altar in St. Michael's, and there was also a Jesus altar in Holy Trinity.

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29. PCC, 37 Bodfelde; 32 Fetiplace; LJRO, Heryng, Thomas, 8/3/36.

30. J. Bossy, Christianity in the West 1400-1700, (OUP, 1985), 7-8.

The confraternity doubtless grew out of the popularity of the cult of the Holy Name in the late middle ages[31]. The altars in both parish churches were extremely popular, and testators made more bequests to the Jesus altars than to any other altar or chapel in them. Bequests were made to maintain the altar, to embellish and adorn it and especially to maintain the mass celebrated before it, the benefits of which they wished to share in. They could have shared in the benefits of numerous other masses celebrated in the city, but seem to have preferred this one.

There were also several dedications to the Trinity in Coventry. There was the parish church of Holy Trinity, which also contained a side chapel dedicated to the same, and there was altars to the Trinity in St. Michael's and Bablake church, which belonged to the omnipotent Trinity Guild. Mention might also be made here of the fraternity of the Holy Ghost, about which little is known beyond a couple of references to it in the wills. It was almost certainly devotional in character, as was the confraternity of Jesus, and seems to have centred around a pardon, or indulgence. These were all relatively old foundations by the sixteenth century, however. A new dedication to the Trinity was the almshouse founded by Thomas Bond the elder in 1506, and the poor were to wear black gowns and hoods, 'with a conysaunt of the Trynitie before and behynde'[32].

The last religious festival in the year was Corpus Christi. Corpus Christi day itself fell on the first Thursday after Trinity

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31. ibid., 10-11.

32. PCC, 22 Adeane, and see above, 74-6

Sunday, and had been established in order to encourage orthodox belief in the Real Presence. Not that the sacrament went unobserved during the year. Shere (as it was known at Coventry) or Maundy Thursday, commemorated the institution of the Last Supper, but the day was so full of ceremonies and observances that there was not enough time to celebrate the sacrament properly. The day was known as Shere Thursday because custom was that men shaved themselves and had their hair cut on this day. It is known also as Maundy Thursday (Maundy, from mandatum: charge or command), because the feet of twelve poor people were washed and given food and drink in memory of Christ's act of humility in washing the feet of his disciples. It is sometimes called 'absolution day', because people received acknowledgement of their repentance of sin in the form of a rod being placed in their hands. The same day the high altars and all the side altars were stripped of their ornaments and cloths to remind people of the way in which Christ was stripped of clothing before his crucifixion and washed with holy water and wine. And lastly, two hosts were consecrated for the following day when one was used in the Mass of the Presanctified and the other placed in the Easter Sepulchre. By setting aside another day during the year, therefore, the sacrament could be celebrated with due honour[33].

The celebrations on Corpus Christi Day in Coventry were particularly magnificent. First, mass was celebrated in

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33. Many of these various elements to the day at Coventry are evident from the offices of the first and second deacons of Holy Trinity, Sharp loc. cit.

St. Nicholas' church, belonging to Corpus Christi Guild. After mass the consecrated host was ceremoniously carried through the streets of the city in procession. This was attended by craft fellowships, civic officers, councillors and aldermen, the mayor and clergy. The procession made its way through the city to either another church, or back to St. Nicholas', it is not known which, where the host was deposited. With this the procession came to an end and the second part of the day's celebrations could get under way.

On Corpus Christi Day Coventry staged a complete cycle of mystery plays relating the Christian story from the Creation to Doomsday, which began immediately after the procession had ended. The cycle was in some ways unique, particularly in the fact that there were only ten plays. The term 'plays' is misleading, however, for they were individually extremely large: each concerned itself with a sequence of the Christian Story rather than one event. In contemporary records they are usually referred to as 'pageants' instead of plays, which does perhaps better convey their character. They were paid for and staged by ten of the thirty-three crafts in the city, being performed in moveable waggons which were stationed at various points about the city. Only two stations are definitely known: the Mercers' pageant stood in the market place of Cross Cheaping, and the Smiths' stood in Gosford Street. Another station is known to have existed near the Greyfriars, but which craft staged its pageant there is not known. It has been suggested that the locations of the remaining seven stations were Jordan Well, New Gate,

Little Park Street, the conduit in Smithford Street, Bablake church, St. Michael's church and St. John's Hospital. This arrangement placed a pageant in each of the ten wards of the city, and it has been further suggested that the development of the cycle was originally influenced by the ward division of the city. It is an attractive view, but so little of the early development of the pageants is known that it cannot be more than a suggestion[34].

Of the ten plays, only two are extant, though the contents of four others are known, or can be deduced. The Shermen and Tailors were responsible for the sequence of events embracing the Annunciation, the Nativity and the Slaughter of the Innocents. The Weavers dealt with the Epiphany and the Purification. There then follows a lengthy sequence, which was probably divided into two shorter sequences, for which the crafts responsible are not known. The shorter sequences were probably the events of Christ's Baptism, the Temptation and Christ's entry into Jerusalem, and the Last Supper and Christ's betrayal and Capture. The Smiths staged the next sequence, dealing with Christ's trial and Crucifixion. The Cardmakers and Saddlers, before 1531, and the Cappers thereafter, stages the Descent into Hell, the Resurrection and Christ's appearance before his disciples. The Mercers were responsible for staging the death and Assumption of Mary and Mary's appearance to Thomas. Lastly, the Drapers were responsible for Doomsday. Other crafts which

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34. The stations of ten pageants were suggested by H. Craig (ed.)., Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays, 2nd edn. (EETS, extra series, LXXXVII, 1957), xiii-xiv.

supported pageants were the Girdlers, Tanners, Whittawers and the Pinners and Needlers, Tilers and Coopers, although it is not known which they supported. All of the above pageants dealt with subjects from the New Testament, but it is generally accepted that the cycle at Coventry included subjects from the Old Testament as well. If two of the four above named crafts supported pageants dealing with the two unassigned New Testament sequences, then the other two must have concerned themselves with the Old Testament subjects to complete the cycle[35].

The assigning of a particular play to a craft was probably not arbitrary, at least in the first instance, but reflected some affinity between the subject matter and the craft. For example, the Shermen and Tailors, who staged the Nativity as part of their pageant, were as we have seen a combined guild dedicated to the Nativity. This is confirmed by the craft's seal, which represents the Virgin Mary seated, crowned, with an infant Jesus on her lap, receiving gifts from the three kings. The Mercers may well have been a fraternity in honour of the Assumption: the craft's coat of arms represented the Virgin, crowned, rising through an encircling band of clouds[36]. Such affinities ceased to have any meaning when a pageant changed hands, such as when the Cappers took over the Cardmakers and Saddlers pageant in 1531. While the affinity was maintained, however, the crafts probably looked upon them with

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35. ibid., xv.

36. ibid., xvi.

especial pride: they were then an outward expression of the fraternity's raison d'être.

It is sometimes thought that a distinction existed between the procession and the ensuing plays on Corpus Christi Day, where the religious side to the celebations ended with the procession and the pageants merely represented a secular side to the day's celebrations. But, as A. Kolve has shown, the plays were profoundly religious in content and purpose[37]. They rehearsed the whole Christian story, explained the 'necessity' of Christ's sacrifice for man's redemption and placed the institution of the Eucharist in its full context. They fulfilled a didactic role, therefore, which complemented the preceding procession, and so were far from being celebrations of a merely secular kind.

If the plays had an educational purpose, it is pertinent to ask if those watching understood what was being presented to them and if they looked upon them as instructive. People were well attuned to having the events of the Scriptures presented to them in a dramatic form: the events of Christ's life were presented to them in a highly visual way, as a living picture, throughout the Church year, which was the only means of imprinting on the minds of uneducated people the passages of the Scriptures. The didactic role of the Corpus Christi Plays was noted by contemporaries and

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37. A. Kolve, A Play Called Corpus Christ, (1966), 33-56, but especially 44-46.

has since recognised by literary scholars and historians[38]. Sometimes the plays were recommended to the people by the clergy, as the following story reveals. Among the stories published in 1526 by John Rastell of London, although a native of Coventry, in 'A hundred Mery Talys' is one entitled 'Of the curat that prechyd the artycles of the Crede'. The curate in question was the parish priest of a village in Warwickshire, who, 'thoughe he were no gret clark nor graduat of ye vnyuersyte yet he prechyd to his paryshons ypon a Sonday declarying to them the xii aertycles of the Crede'. Having preached to them on one occasion he enjoined his parishioners to believe the twelve articles 'for they be trew & of auctoryte', and added, 'And yf you beleve not me then for a more serten & suffycyent auctoryte go your way to coventre and there ye shall see them all played in corpus christi playe'. The merits of the curate's recommendation might be questionable, since it was his place to educate his parishioners in the faith, but it is clear the educational role of the plays was nevertheless recognised by contemporaries[39].

Corpus Christi Day, too, was regulated by the crafts. The Drapers ordered 'the precesson kept on Corpus crysty daye the pageond & play well broughte fforth with harnesse off men & the watch kept

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38. The didactive role of the plays was appreciated at Chester, where another full cycle was played. See M. James, 'Ritual, Drama and Social Body in the Late Medieval English Towns', Past and Present, 98, 13 n.42.

39. H. Oesterley (ed.), 'A Hundred Mery Talys (1526)', (1866), 99-100.

at mydsomur on Seynt peters Nyght with order & good Customes whiche have byn usyd In olde tyme to the laude & prays of god & ye worshypp of thys Cytte'. The Fullers ordered that 'if any of the seyde fellowshippe be absent apon Corpus cristi day (being a day usuallie to mete withoute warnynge) shall forfayt for every defaulte the sume of 6s. 8d'. Usually when a fellowship was to meet warning was given by the clerk or summoner of the craft. The Fullers evidently considered such a warning on Corpus Christi Day unnecessary, which itself suggests the importance attached to attendance. The Smiths ordered that journey of the craft were 'to wate upon the hede mayster upon Corpus Xpisti daye to goo upon procession, also to wate upon the maysters and attende upon the pageant to the worsshipe of this cite and the crafte'. The Tanners ordered that every member of their fellowship was to be 'redie with the maisters to bringe forth the padiant and to be with the maisters on Corpus Xpi day and to follow the procession in the worship of the Citie', upon pain of a fine of 12d. for every default. Lastly, the Tilers ordered that those chosen as masters 'schullen bye an honest lyverye that the Crafte may be honestly clothes ynne agenst Corpus Xpi day in worshippe of God and owre Mayr and the Citie', and that 'every man that is of the lyvery schall come on Corpus Xpi daye, And honestly to go with the procession', uppon pain of a fine of a pound of wax for default[40].

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40. Drapers, CRO, Access. 154 (Daffern), f2, Fullers, Reader, c7, f112; Smiths, H. Craig, op. cit., 95; Tanners, CRO, Access. 241, f2; Tilers, BL Harleian MS 6466, f3.

The pains which the craft fellowships took to ensure members' attendance were again bound up with the fact that they were defining themselves publicly on this day. This is stated explicitly by the Smiths, whose ordinance refers directly to the 'worship' of the craft, and the Tilers, in its reminder that members of the fellowship should obtain a livery coat. The craft was not rich, and livery coats were expensive. The status of crafts was revealed by their position in the procession. They proceeded in a carefully defined order: the humbler crafts first, followed by the more important ones. At the front, in the junior position, were the victuallers. Next came the leather and metal occupations, and behind them the wool and textile trades upon whom the city's prosperity depended, culminating in the places of honour occupied by the Dyers, Drapers and Mercers, the most wealthy occupations in the city. The order also reflected the contribution of each to providing civil officers. The victuallers were prevented from holding civil office by parliamentary statute, despite the fact that some were wealthy men. The leather and metal trades were not particularly conspicuous in supplying members to civil office. The wood and textile occupations however, in particular the last three named above, supplied the majority of civil officers[41]. After the crafts came the civil officers, councillors, aldermen,

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41. C.V. Phythian-Adams, 'Ceremony and the Citizen: the Communal Year at Coventry 1450-1550', in Clark and Slack (eds.), Crisis and Order in English Towns 1500-1700. Essays in Urban History, (1972), 63.

etc., and last of all, marching next to the host at the rear of the procession, with its attendant clergy, the mayor.

On Corpus Christi Day the crafts were upholding more than their own honour, however, they were proclaiming the honour or 'worship' of the city itself, as their ordinances explained. On this day, perhaps more than any other, the city presented and defined itself in relation to the outside world. The procession and the plays attracted large numbers of people into the city from outside: both those in the area immediately surrounding the city as well as from farther afield. They also provided the occasion for visits by monarchs and other members of the royal family. The City Annals for 1485 state that Richard III visited Kenilworth at Whitsuntide this year, 'and at Corpus Christy came to Coventry to see their playes'. Similarly the Annals for 1493 state that Henry VII visited the city 'to see the Plays acted by near the Grey Friers and much commended them'[42].

The Corpus Christi Plays also provided the city with the opportunity to mark royal visits at other times during the year. When Henry VIII visited Coventry in 1511 a number of dramatic interludes and plays were performed. The City Annals state that there were '3 Pageants set forth, one at Iordan well, with 9 orders of Angells. Another at Broadgate with divers beautiful Damsells. Another at Cross Cheaping with a goodly Stage Play'. The play was that belonging to the Mercers' craft, which stood at Cross

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42. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 222, 223

Cheaping. In 1526 the king's sister Mary visited Coventry, perhaps sent by her brother in the wake of the riots in the city of the previous year. The Annals state that 'the Mercers Pageant Gallantly trimmed stood in the Cross Cheaping'. The subject matter of the Mercers' play was particularly appropriate on this occasion given the identity of the royal visitor. It should be pointed out, however, that on both these occasions it was the pageant belonging to the most senior craft in the city which was played[43].

Coventry also benefited commercially from the Corpus Christi Day celebrations. The influx of people provided much extra business, in particularly for the victuallers, hostelries, guest-houses, ale-houses and inns. Probably the city council drew up a book of the 'price of all maner vitailles' as it did on these occasions when the king, other members of the royal family and the chapter of the Black Monks visited the city, in order that the tradesmen should not take undue advantage of the visitors. More than this, however, the Corpus Christi Day celebrations coincided with the start of the annual eight-day Corpus Christi Fair in Coventry, the high-point in the city's commercial endeavours. The fair was proclaimed on Fair Friday, the day after Corpus Christi Day, and was held for the following eight days[44]. The mayor and his officers, accompanied by a group of armed men supplied by the crafts to keep order, paraded through the streets of the city on this day proclaiming the fair

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43. ibid., 226.

44. CRO, B48, Charter of Conformation, dated 7th July 1445.

at various points. The coincidence of the plays and the fair was undoubtedly intended, and many of those visitors who had been attracted to the city to see the plays probably stayed for the accompanying fair. Looked at from this point of view, the plays were attractive bait to bring people into the city, though this did not detract from their didactic purpose.

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So far we have been concerned with the official life of the Church, as expressed through Sunday observance and the annual sequence of major religious festivals. But overlapping, and sometimes merging with, the liturgical year were a number of other observances and customs. Some harked back to pagan times, other were part of Christian folklore, yet more were based on historical events, myths and legends. All were interwoven into the pattern of the year at Coventry and formed an important part of it, more often than not providing the focus of social activity within the community.

The twelve days of Christmas were one of three extended holidays at Coventry when all work ceased and the inhabitants took to recreation and 'license'. There is some evidence that the custom of electing a Lord of Misrule, or Master of Merry Disports, was observed over the Twelve Days. The City Annals for 1517 state, "Henry Rogers Vintiner he kept open house the 12 days in Christmas and one of his Sergeants was lord of Misrule'[45]. This custom, which was also found in other towns and cities, at Court, in great households, university colleges and Inns of Court, required that the traditional figure

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45. City Annals, CRO, Access. 2/F, f I9.

of authority abdicated his position in favour of someone of less authority, styled the Lord of Misrule. This did not mean that the individual was a 'lord' of unruliness, though this almost certainly turned out to be the case sometimes, but of mis-rule or mis-government. The mayor was the figure upon which the office-holding structure of the city depended, while the city sergeants were at the bottom of this structure. By relinquishing his authority to one of his sergeants the mayor bridged the gulf which existed between them throughout the rest of the year. The sight of the mayor in a 'subservient' position probably did much to relieve tensions which had developed as a result of his dominant position during his year of office, and it was probably not coincidence that Christmas was chosen for this role-reversal. The mayor had been in office for almost a year, and this was the last major holiday before his successor was elected in late January. If there were to be no residual feelings of animosity left among the office-holding class and the people as a whole, this was the last opportunity to dispel it.

There were a number of other times in the year at Coventry when social norms were temporarily relaxed and inverted in this way. Social anthropologists claim that these occasions allowed communities to let off steam, to cut the bumptious down to size, to 'knock' the establishment and generally indulge in behaviour which was not normally permitted. Such times, they argue, actually served to strengthen the bonds within communities, because they dispelled the tensions generated by rigidities in the social structure.

They were the safety valves of society at this time, therefore, and the custom of electing a Lord of Misrule at Christmas was one such valve.

It is widely thought that the feast of the boy-bishop was another occasion on which social norms were temporarily reversed. The custom was to dress up a boy as a bishop, who, with other children as attendants, participated in a series of processions and benedictions culminating in a sermon. Traditionally this has been seen as a burlesque ridiculing of authority, in which children were allowed to relax the constraints of discipline imposed upon them during the year. It is therefore frequently cited as another example of that licensed 'topsy-turvydom' which played an important role in social control. It was in fact a religious ceremony with a serious purpose, and to see it as anything else probably arises from confusing it with the Feast of Fools, when, on one day a year, the lesser clergy took charge of ritual observance, which often did result in a burlesque of sacred ceremony. The similarities between the Feast of Fools and the feast of the boy-bishop are superficially obvious. However, they are of no relevance here. The Feast of Fools was a festival seldom found in England, being almost exclusively confined to Europe, especially France[46].

The feast of the boy-bishop is the common term for the feast of Holy Innocents (28 December), which commemorated the massacre

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46. E.K. Chambers, The Mediaeval Stage, (Oxford, 1903) 1, 274-335, For evidence of the Feast in England, see 331-33.

of the children of Bethlehem ordered by Herod. A boy did dress up as a bishop and take part in a number of ceremonies, but he did not take part in a mass, as is sometimes thought, so there was no burlesque or parody of sacred ceremony. The purpose behind the ceremony was to represent dramatically the story of the slaughter of the innocents, and exhort the people to adopt the virtues of children, particularly the Child Jesus. The presentation of events in Christ's life in a dramatic way has already been mentioned: this is another example.

The claim that the feast of Holy Innocents was a serious religious festival was put forward by R.L. DeMolen, who sees it as a religious ceremony per se, acknowledging the innocence of children and promoting virtues commonly associated with them. He emphasises that the sermon was at the heart of the ceremony, and surviving examples stress the childhood virtues of meekness, simplicity and innocence. Children were thought to be closer to God spiritually because of their natural virtues, and were held up as models for adults to emulate. The ceremony had a basis in Scripture (e.g. Mathew 18:3-4). DeMolen does not deny, however, that the festival did attract an undesirable element during its long history, but this does not alter the fact that the purpose of the ceremony was to promote the virtues of the Child Jesus, or suggest that the ceremony had generally degenerated into something approaching the European Feast of Fools. This was certainly not the case at Coventry[47].

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47. R.L. DeMolen, 'Pueri Christi Imitato: The Festival of the Boy-Bishop in Tudor England', Moreana, xlv, (1975), 17-28.

Some inhabitants of Coventry demonstrated their support for the festival by making bequests to it. In 1507 Joan Semans bequeathed her scarlet cloak to the boy-bishop of St. Michael's for the time being 'to make theym A Robe', on condition that, 'the bisshop for the tyme beyng with the Children shal com to my husbands grave and myn and there to say de profandis for my husbands soule and myn the same dat that they do at the grave of Thomas Wyldegresse in the drapers chapell' - which shows how far the duties of the boy-bishop at Coventry could extend. Moreover, it suggests that the inhabitants of Coventry did not look upon the festival as a parody or, burlesque of authority: such a serious matter as praying for a husband's soul would hardly have been entrusted to a figure of fun[48].

Christmas was the only one of the three major annual holidays at Coventry when some relaxation of a normally strict code of behaviour was allowed. Such periods of license were unlikely to be allowed at Easter and Whitsun, when the nature of the religious occasion was altogether more serious. A fragment of the city council minutes for 1524 reveals that at one of the weekly meetings of the mayor and members of his inner council on Wednesday in the second week in Lent, "It was agreed that the aldermen should examine and punish bawdry and other misdoers during Lent'[49]. Such an order

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48. PCC, 28 Adeane.

49. BL, Harleian MS 7571, f31.

may in part have been a response to events which occurred in the city between December 1523 and February 1524. In December a conspiracy was unearthed which seems to have fused the plans of certain elements at Court, including Francis Philips, 'scole-master to the kynges Henxemen', Christopher Pickering, 'Clarke to the King's Larder', and Anthony Manville, gentleman, and two citizens, named Pratt and Slouth. They planned to assassinate the mayor and aldermen and then rob St. Mary's Hall, where most likely there was kept 'the kynges treasure of his subsidie as the collectors of the same came towards London'. The idea was then to raise men and take Kenilworth castle and hold it against the king. Well before any of this happened the plot was uncovered and the conspirators arrested. They were tried in London, but Pratt and Slouth were returned to Coventry for execution. Their eviscerated and quartered corpses were displayed on various city gates as grisly public warnings[50].

These executions would have been carried out about the beginning of Lent in 1524. Easter was early this year, falling on 27 March, and Ash Wednesday fell on 9 February. The meeting of the inner council was on 23 February, and its order was probably in response to the prevailing atmosphere in the city. But even without the special circumstances of this year, stricter standards of behaviour were required at this time, of course. License at Christmas might be acceptable given that it was a time of rejoicing

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50. Phythian-Adams, Desolation of a City, 253-54.

for the birth of Christ, but Lent was a time of preparation for Easter and Christ's death and crucifixion. A relaxed atmosphere would be out of place.

Early in the year the inhabitants of Coventry remembered an important figure in the history of the city: Lady Godiva. Her day was probably 23 January. Thus suggestion is based upon the Weavers' ordinance that the master of the craft 'delyver the goodys of the chapell apon mary maudlyne daye to ye new master and all odere goods apon dame good wever (Godiva) day'. Since the outgoing master presented his accounts and handed over to his successor on 23 January, we may presume that this was Godiva Day[51]. The form which the celebrations took is nowhere indicated, although there is a slight possibility that there was a procession. It is known, however, that the cappers attended mass en bloc on 'Dame Goodyves daye', and perhaps this was the general practice of the crafts, especially given the nature of Godiva's contribution to the city's development[52].

Tradition had it that the city owed the beginnings of its commercial freedom to Godiva, which she secured by making her celebrated ride through the city. She wished to see Coventry freed from its 'servitude', as one chronicle puts it, or excessive 'tolls', as another states. It is likely that the servitude referred to was indeed the tolls themselves. Having made repeated

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51. See CRO Weavers, Access. 34/1, f7, Weavers, Access, 100/17/1, f44.

52. Cappers Accounts, f14 passim. The original account book is still in the possession of the Company of Cappers and Feltmakers of Coventry.

requests of her husband Leofric, it seems that in a moment of exasperation he agreed on condition that she ride 'naked' through the market place when the people were gathered there. This she duly did, and on her return Leofric made the necessary arrangements to remove the tolls or taxes. These, it has been suggested, were those which made up the Heregeld levied by the Saxon kings to maintain their housecarl bodyguards. Leofric would have had to appeal to the king for its removal, which was not impossible, if difficult, to secure, and so would not have agreed lightly. Godiva's ride was the necessary spur.

The ride may have had nothing to do with the removal of the tolls, however. The story may have been fused with another tradition. That Godiva made the ride 'naked' has prompted suggestions that a local fertility cult of pagan origin somehow became associated with Godiva's securing the removal of the tolls. Fertility rites often included a ride by a naked person, it being thought that he or she was closer to the soil. There is no evidence to suggest that there was a local fertility cult in Mercia before the coming of Christianity, however, which considerably weakens this argument. A more plausible counter-argument is that a folk tradition may have fused with the original story. A common device in folk tales was that of the virtuous wife who helped the poor in spite of the hostility of her husband, and underwent a difficult task in order to secure from him what she wanted. In this case, instead of interpreting the term 'naked' literally, it is interpreted metaphorically to mean that Godiva rode through the city devoid of all marks of rank and authority. This seems the more likely

version. Godiva was a devout christian. She was especially dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and gave all her possessions to endow a monastery in her name. The early chroniclers of Godiva's ride were monks of St. Albans, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and it is unlikely that they would have linked a pagan tradition to such a Christian figure.

It has even been suggested that the ride was for a quite different purpose than any given above. Leofric had taken lands from the monasteries of Evesham and Worcester, but was later persuaded to return them by Godiva. Her ride is therefore seen as a public act of reparation on her husband's behalf for taking the lands. The plausibility of this story is again attested to by the fact that the early chroniclers of the legend were monks. They would have been far more inclined to record the restoration of church lands than the removal of a secular tax, and may have linked the means by which the former was secured with the latter[53].

Whatever the origins of the ride, the tradition of Godiva freeing the city from its tolls persisted and was the one accepted by the inhabitants of Coventry. In the late fourteenth century a stained glass window was installed in Holy Trinity representing Leofric and Godiva, and bore the inscription:

> I Luriche for the love of thee
> Doe make Coventre tol-fre[54].

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53. The most exhaustive study of the Godiva legend is that by Joan Lancaster and E.H.R. Davidson, Godiva of Coventry (Coventry. 1967), which has been followed here, who disagree with the idea that the legend fused with that of a fertility goddess. This interpretation is favoured by Diane Bolton, in VCH, Warw., VIII, 242-47.
54. W. Dugdale, The Antiquities of Warwickshire, (1656), 86.

In a trade dispute with Bristol over tolls on Coventry goods in 1493, the corporation declared that the merchants and inhabitants of the city had had 'many gret liberties & ffranchises to them graunted be kynges before the Conquest & sith they owe to be free of Toll'. Though Godiva's name is not mentioned, this is almost certainly a reference to the tradition. In 1495, eight days after Lammas Day, some verses appeared on St. Michael's door. They ranged over a number of grievances of some citizens, including taxes on the same of wool and cloth, heavy fees which apprentices had to pay and a recent ruling that only those named by the mayor could ride with the chamberlains to open the common lands, because of riots. They began:

> Be it knowen & understand
> This Cite should be free & now is bond
> Dame goode Eve made it free:

On 26 July the following year more verses appeared on the minster door, complaining that certain common lands were not opened for pasture on Lammas Day. They echoed the previous year's rhyme, and although Godiva's name is not mentioned it is almost certainly alluded to:

> The cyte is bond that shuld be fre[55].

Another historical event was commemorated at Coventry on Hock Tuesday, the second Tuesday after Easter. On this day a play or mock-battle was enacted celebrating the overthrow of the Danes

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55. LB, 549, 567, 577.

by the English on 13 November 1002. From late sixteenth-century sources (all that remain) the event was presented as a 'storiall sheaw', which was 'expressed in actionz & rymez'. Naturally it played up the part of Coventry's inhabitants in the defeat: how 'the inhabitants of this Citye, with their neighbours utterly overthrew them [the Danes] in their last conflict with the Saxons'. It also dwelt at length on 'how valiently our English women for looue of their cuntree behaued themseluez', and how, after the battle many Danes were 'led captive for triumph by our English weemen'[56]. This emphasis on the role of women provided a temporary reversal of the roles of the sexes and provided some recompense for the inequalities between married men and women. The custom was that on Hock Tuesday women caught and bound, or 'hocked', any man they encountered, releasing him only upon the payment of a forfeit[57]. Hock Tuesday may also have functioned as something of a release valve after the rigours and constraints of Lent and Easter. The celebrations were not held on the anniversary of the defeat of the Danes, but on a day which came after the religious festival of Easter.

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56. The only major source for the Hock Tuesday play is a description of it by Robert Laneham when it was performed before Elizabeth at Kenilworth castle in 1574. Laneham's letter is printed in full in T. Sharpe, A Dissertation on the Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries Anciently Performed at Coventry, by the Trading Companies of that City; Chiefly with Reference to the Vehicles Characters and Dresses of the Actors, (Coventry 1825), 125-132.

57. Phythian-Adams, Ceremony and the Citizen, 66-7.

May Day was a pagan survival, marking the division between winter and summer, and was dedicated to the goddess Flora. On this day citizens decorated their houses with greenery pilfered from the woods and hedges in the area about the city, one of two occasions in the year in summer when they did this; the other being Midsummer's Eve. The woods and hedges fared badly on these occasions, so much so that in 1480 the prior remarked upon the practise in a list of complaints to the corporation. He stated that in summer the inhabitants of Coventry 'thrown down & beren away the vnderwoode of the seid priour as Birches, holyes, Oke, hauthorn & other at Whitmore parke & other closez & breken his hegges'. The corporation answered the prior by reminding him that, 'the people of every gret Cite, as London & other Citeez, yerely in somur doon harme to divers lordes & gentyles having wodes & Groves nygh to such Citees by takyng of boughes & treez and that the lordes & gentyles suffer sych dedes ofte tymes of theire goode will'. It seems that once again every-day rules did not apply, while the privileged classes, whose interests were normally protected, were expected to acquiesce in such acts. The corporation went on to point out that there was little it could do anyway, since it was almost impossible to identify offenders. Nevertheless, it agreed that the masters of the crafts would be warned each year to 'chargen the people of their Crafte to restrygn such dedes to be don be theym & ther servauntes in eschewyng the doughtfull censures of the Church & also to be punysshed be the temporal lawe'[58].

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58. LB, 445, 455.

May Day was primarily a day for unmarried people, and was pre-occupied with courtship and love-making. It seems that the custom was for young maidens to wear articles of clothing marked in some way with blue, the symbol of universal love, and to give to an unmarried male a piece of clothing similarly marked to indicate their affection for him. A play called 'George a' Grene' of 1529 suggests this custom with particular reference to Coventry. Two characters in it are in conversation:

JENKIN: And she gave me a shirt collar, wrought over with my counterfeit stuff.

GEORGE: What! Was it gold?

JENKIN: Nay: it was better than gold.

GEORGE: What was it?

JENKIN: Right Coventry Blue.

The practise implies a pairing off for the day by couples, but the choice was the woman's. This suggests that May Day was another occasion on which social norms were inverted, in this case in favour of the young unmarried women and was in same way the corollary of Hock Tuesday, which favoured the older, married women[59].

There remained only two more major ceremonial occasions in the city's annual calendar, the marching of the watches on

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59. Phythian-Adams, Ceremony and the Citizen, 66; Poole, op. cit., 348.

Midsummer's Eve (24 June) and St. Peter's Day (29 June). On these occasions the mayor, attended by the aldermen and sheriffs all dressed in their scarlet robes rode through the streets preceded by the craft fellowships and companies, who provided numbers of men wearing military equipment and armed. Again the crafts defined themselves in a publicly visual form, and laid down in their ordinances that all their members should attend. The Dyers ordered that the 'fellowship and company' was to be ready 'when the heade master of the sayde companye sendethe his clerke or somener to gyve his attendaunce on Mydsomer nyghte, to fetche the under master of the same companye at hys howse And from thence to goe to the heade masters howse And there to take suche thynges as shalbe provyded for them And after that to attende uppon bothe the sayde masters before the maior & hys brethren to kepe the kynges watche'. Failure to do so resulted in the stiff penalty of a fine of 13s. 4d. The Mercers similarly ordered that 'every man of the same crafte shalbe redy to attend apon the iiii masters of the saide crafte as every wache when the meyr comaundeth', upon pain of a fine of 12d. The Smiths ordered that any of the craft 'that Wilnot goo in the Watchis on midsomer night and seint petyrs night, or breke the Watche without any laufull cause' were to be fined 3s. 4d. if they did so on Midsummer's Eve and 20d. on St. Peter's Eve[60].

The surviving crafts accounts record various expenses for the marching of the watches on these two nights. To take the Drapers'

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60. Dyers, Sharpe, Dissertation, 182-83; Mercers; Sharpe, ibid., 183; Smiths, Sharpe, ibid., 182.

accounts as our example: they list in 1539 expenses for 'keeping and koloryng or owre white harnes', for hiring 'foure pair of Allman ryvetts' for 'four men yt bayre harnes on both nights', for the 'kresuett lyght on St. John and St. Peter night', for 'hym yt bayre ye podyngs for both nights' and for 'the bearer of the Kressett light for both nights'. Almain-rivets were a form of light armour first used in Germany, whose flexibility was achieved by overlapping plates sliding on rivets. Cresset lights were iron baskets attached to poles in which fire was kindled, and the 'polyngs' were a form of match intended to re-light the cresset if it should go out[61]. The accounts of other crafts record similar expenses, but the numbers of harnessed men and cressets varied. The Drapers and Smiths usually furnished four men and four cressets, the Carpenters two of each, the Cappers two men and four cressets, the Dyers six men and four cressets[62].

The marching of the watches and the maintaining of the harness on these two nights was not done merely for ceremonial purposes. The musters certificates of 1522 stated their purpose clearly, when they reminded the city that harness was to be 'continuallie Kept Within the Citie for the Kepyng of the Kynges Watche on midsomer night & on seint peteris night And also for the kepyng of the Citie & of the Kyngs peace in the faire tyme & all other

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61. Drapers, CRO Access, 154 (Daffern), f16.

62. Sharpe, Dissertation, I92.

seasons &c.'[63]. The watch was kept in the city each night, the escort of the mayor by a small band of harnessed men on Fair Friday has already been mentioned and there were times when the watch was ordered to stand to to defend the city. Two such occasions were Northumberland's and Suffolk's rebellions in 1553 and 1554[64]. The marching on Midsummer's and St. Peter's Eves served to ensure that the watch was maintained in readiness if it was needed. It ensured that the harness in the city was properly maintained at least: the craft's accounts sometimes list payment for its repair before the two marchings took place.

Midsummer's and St. Peter's Eves were also times for commensality and socialising. The temporary suspension of the prohibition against night-time activities provided ample opportunity for this. The mayor on Midsummer's Eve and the sheriffs on St. Peter's Eve were accustomed to entertain at least the officers of the crafts after the marching of the watches at their own expense by providing them with food and drink[65]. It is possible, however, that whole fellowships were the beneficiaries of the mayor's and sheriffs' largesse. The mayor and sheriffs probably did not attend any of these 'drinkings', which would have taken place at various points about the city. In any case, on Midsummer's Eve the mayor was occupied elsewhere, as indeed were many craft members, for 24 June was also the Nativity of St. John the Baptist,

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63. CRO, Access. 24, f115.

64. See below, 517-18.

65. See below, 204.

one of the four occasions during the year when Trinity Guild met for a dinner and also the dedication day of the guild's church. The mayor attended the dirge on this night cric in Bablake church and mass the next morning followed by a breakfast[66].

On exceptional occasions the celebrations on St. Peter's Eve were extended. For example, in 1487, according to the City Annals, the king with the archbishop of Canterbury and his council and an army stopped at Coventry before marching north to defeat the earl of Lincoln and the pretender Lambert Simnel at East Stoke near Newark on 16 June this year. On his return south with the captured Simnel, the king visited Coventry again 'to see there playes on St. peters day'. The plays were probably some of those which made up the Corpus Christi cycle. Then in 1516 the chapter of the Black Monks met at Coventry on St. Peter's Day. A letter of 8 June by a certain Thomas Allen to the Earl of Shrewsbury on behalf of the abbot of Westminster requests that he send some venison for the occasion: 'yf hit please yor Lordship to send to Coventre to my lord Abbot of Westminster (at the generall chaptre agaynst Saynt Peter Day, wich shalbe the xxixti day of this monethe) som venyson yor Lordship dose hem gret comfoort'[67].

A carnival-like atmosphere prevailed on Midsumer's Eve. Surviving evidence is late, mainly from the 1550s, but it seems

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66. Poole, op. cit., 211

67. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 223.

that in the first place some of the crafts carried huge carnival-type giants in the procession. The Cappers' accounts from 1533, and the Drapers' from 1556 list payments for a single giant and two giants, representing a man and wife, respectively. Candles were burned inside the hollow heads of these giants: the Cappers' accounts for 1540 record a payment of 2d. 'for the candelsteke in hys hed & the lyght', which would have given them a terrible appearance at night[68].

There were also special events staged in certain years. In 1542 the Drapers spent 26s. 8d. on a pageant 'that was gyven to Mr. Meire on mydsomer nyght', and the 12lbs. of gunpowder blasted off by the same craft in 1554, 'when Master Norton was mere'. This last remark reveals the motivation behind these events which were not regular, although probably frequent: they were means by which the Drapers advertised that the present mayor was of their craft, and so they were trumpeting their craft's temporary prominence. In 1542 Christopher Waren, a draper, was mayor, and in 1554 the aforesaid William Norton, also a draper, was mayor. This seems to have been a regular practise so far as the Drapers was concerned, and so it is safe to assume that other crafts did the same. Each year, therefore, something spectacular would have been staged by the craft of which the mayor was a member, all of which added to the carnival-spirit of the night[69].

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68. Cappers Accounts, f47; Drapers, Sharpe, op. cit., 201-2.

69. Phythian-Adams, Ceremony and the Citizen, 63; Drapers, CRO, Access, 154 (Daffern), f24.

Midsummer's Eve, of course, marked the summer solstice, and there are pagan overtones to its celebrations. Fire was an important symbol at this time, being looked upon as a purifying agent to clean the air. Not only was fire carried through the streets in the evening by the marching watch, but bonfires were lit at various places about the city. These fires afforded focal points for neighbourhood gatherings. Another survival of a superstitious practise was the decoration of houses with greenery purloined from woods and hedges about the city, as on May Day. It is even possible that the celebrations on this night were in some ways an extension of the May Games. The Dyers' accounts for 1554 list a payment of 6s. 8d. for this night 'to John Swaneborn for the cloth that wentt to the hartts cote & for the payntyne the same cloth and the hartt & all that longith to hit'. The following year a series of payments were made for the same: 20d. 'for the hartts cote'; 4d. 'for carrying the tree before ye hartt'; 12d. 'to the dawnsers for dauncynge'; 10d. 'for dressyng of the hartt & for mendyng of the head'; 4d. 'to the heyrdman for blowyng before ye hart' and 4d. 'to Johh Stuards servand for leyding ye hart'. The 'tree before ye hartt' may be a reference to a may-pole, and the dancers may have been morris dancers[70].

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So far we have looked at the religious festivals of Christmas, Easter and Whitsun, culminating on Corpus Christi Day, as well as the major secular occasions of Hock Tuesday, May Day, Midsummer's

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70. Dyers, Sharpe, op. cit. 200-1

Eve and St. Peter's Day. C.V. Phythian-Adams in his pioneering study of an urban ceremonial year, which happened to be that of Coventry[71], looked upon the half of the year in which all these observances fell as the 'ritual' half. The other, or 'secular' half as he called it, was the time for normal economic activities which could continue uninterrupted by ritual observances. This was particularly important because the harvest fell in this half. This is true for the most part. There were some interruptions during the secular half, as Professor Phythian-Adams pointed out himself, namely, the election of guild and craft officials[72], but he said nothing of the many saints' days which also fell during this half of the year. These frequently interrupted economic activities and were surrounded with considerable ritual and ceremony. Saints' days fell throughout the year, of course, and those which fell in the 'ritual' half of the year merely crowded the calendar further, but there was a considerable number of them in the 'secular' months (as we shall see) which blurred the distinction between the two halves of the year.

There were numerous dedications of churches, guilds, chapels, 'services', etc. to Mary in Coventry. Hers was the chief dedication of the cathedral, and the monks preserved 'A pese of Owre Ladyes Tombe Closyd in Copper' and Owre ladies mylke in Syluer and gylt'[73]. One of the four smaller fraternities which

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71. Phythian-Adams, Ceremony and the Citizen.

72. ibid. 75-6.

73. BL, Egerton MS 2603, 17, ff26-7.

made up Trinity Guild was dedicated to her, as were chapels in the guild's church at Bablake and both parish churches. Just outside New Gate was the chapel of the Virgin of the Tower, which contained a shrine to her, and on the chapel's exterior wall 'was a picture of the blessed Virgin richly painted'[74]. And there was St. Mary's Hall of course, once the guild hall of the fraternity dedicated to her which was now the place where the city council met. Doubtless all her feastdays were observed in Coventry. Certainly, the Weavers ordered its members to cease work after 1 p.m. on her vigil days upon pain of a fine of 3s. 4d[75]. There were eight feastdays dedicated to Mary: the Purification (2 February), the Annunciation (25 March), the Salutation (25 June), the Visitation (2 July), the Assumption (15 August), the Nativity (8 September), the Presentation (21 November) and the Conception (8 December). Surviving fragments of Trinity Guild's accounts for 1533-34 show that this year the guild assembled on her Nativity and Assumption[76]. The latter would have been of particular significance to the Mercers, if, as been suggested, this craft was a fraternity of the Assumption[77].

Also popular at Coventry were saints with local connections, such as St. Osburg, whose day, like Godiva's, was 23 January.

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74. Mary Dormer-Harris, Dr. Troughton's Sketches of Coventry (Coventry and London n.d.), 6.
75. Weavers, CRO, 34/1, f4.
76. Templeman, op. cit., 155, 157.
77. See above, 151.

Osburg was originally the abbess of the nunnery which stood where the cathedral priory was situated. The nunnery was sacked and the abbess martyred by Edric Streana in 1016 when he harried Warwickshire in his advance south with Cnut[78]. St. Osburg's Day was not officially observed until 1410, when the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield gave his permission to do so[79]. St. Osburg was a lesser dedicatee of the cathedral, and in the minster was 'A shryne of Saynt Osbornes of Copper and gylte'. The monks also preserved 'Saynt Osbornes hedde Closyd in Copper and gylt'[80]. The Weavers chose St. Osburg's Day for their annual general meeting and were closely involved in the celebrations on this saint's day. The craft accounts list payments for 'when we went to byd for saynt osbern nyght', for 'makyng of sent osbern lyght' and for 'the clerk In ye pryore for lyghtyng of seynt osbowrs lyght'. Presumably, members of the craft attended mass in the cathedral on this night before their dinner[81].

Another popular saint at Coventry was St. George, and a major procession about the city marked the feast day of this patron saint

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78. Joan Lancaster, 'Coventry' in M.D. Label and W.H. Johns (eds.), The Atlas of Historic Towns, ii, Bristol; Cambridge; Coventry; Norwich, (1975), 2.

79. F. Biss Burbidge, Old Coventry and Lady Godiva: Being Some Flowers of Coventry History, (Birmingham n.d.), 14-15.

80 BL, Egerton MS loc. cit.

81. Weavers, CRO, Access, 100/17/1 f7, passim.

of England on 23 April. This was not just an expression of nationalistic pride, however, for legend claimed Coventry was the birth and death place of St. George[82]. There are allusions to the saint in the city seal and coat of arms suggesting this: the reverse of the city seal showed St. Michael with a shield bearing a St. George cross killing a dragon, while it has been suggested that the elephant in the city's coat of arms may be connected with the dragon[83]. Moreover, above Gosford Gate hung a giant bone of what was said to have been a fabulous boar slain by Guy of Warwick, who, according to one tradition, was one of the three sons of St. George[84]. The placing of the bone at this gate was not haphazard, however, for the Shermen and Tailors' chapel of St. George was situated here, and was probably the focus of the procession on St. George's Day. The city's pride in its association with this saint also revealed itself in the popularity of presenting in tableau form the killing of the dragon by the saint when royalty visited Coventry. In 1474, when Edward Prince of Wales and, in 1498 Arthur Prince of Wales visited the city identical tableaux greeted them at Cross Cheaping. St. George addressed a speech to the prince on each occasion promising to preserve him as he himself had delivered the lady from the 'foule serpent'[85].

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82. VCH Warw., VIII, 245-6

83. LB, 857

84. DNB.

85. LB, 391-93, 589-92.

Despite the identification of St. George with Coventry, it did not lead to the creation of a major guild in the city under the patronage of this saint as in many other towns and cities. The reason for this was that the already existing guilds of Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi automatically resisted the establishment of any further guilds which they considered detrimental to their own position. There was an attempt to establish a Guild of St. George in the early 1420s, by 'servants of the tailors and other artificers', who held meetings in St. George's chapel and elsewhere in the city. They maintained the same fraternity with collections from among themselves and had elected masters, clerks and other officers. Trinity Guild and Corpus Christi Guild quickly opposed the formation of this guild, on the grounds that it was 'to the discredit and injury of them... and to the injury of the whole community of the same city'. On 14 February 1525 the king addressed letters to the mayor, bailiffs and justices of the peace of Coventry 'to make proclamations and order the offenders to desist from holding such meetings, and from maintaining the same unauthorised Guild of St. George or any like fraternities, and to arrest promptly all persons who disregard the said proclamations'[86].

It is clear from the nature of the guild's membership that St. George's Guild was unlike Trinity or Corpus Christi Guilds. It was in fact one of several journeymen guilds which sought to establish themselves in the city in the late fourteenth and

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86. CRO, B43.

and early fifteenth centuries. In this period the journeymen found their position seriously undermined by an influx of people from the countryside into the city. This increased the supply of labour at a time when it was still difficult for the journeyman to pay entry fines, buy costly liveries or find the necessary capital to set themselves up as masters. These problems tended to keep them among the ranks of labourers. Reacting to this situation, the journeymen of the minor textile crafts, namely Shearmen, Fullers, Tailors and others unnamed sought to protect themselves by forming into guilds. The first attempt was made in 1384 when certain unnamed journeymen sought to found a Guild of the Nativity, for the support of a priest to hold the usual services for the souls of the founders and all the faithful departed. It was suppressed. Another attempt was made in 1407, when certain journeymen, 'servants of tailors and other artificers' held meetings in the priory under the name of the fraternity of St. Anne. Though the existing guilds and the corporation made attempts at the time to suppress this new guild, they failed and it continued in existence until further royal letters of 1414 were issued which finally brought about its suppression. Eleven years later, in 1425, the Guild of St. George suffered the same fate. On each occasion the reason for the suppression of these guilds was that they 'injured' the existing guilds of Trinity and Corpus Christi[87].

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87. VCH. Warw., VIII, 153-5.

These guilds had been formed because of the changing face of the textile industry in Coventry in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, but though they were initially prompted by economic change, they would almost certainly, in time, have rivalled Trinity Guild and Corpus Christi Guild. Given the associations of Coventry with the patron saint of England, it was only natural that some attempt would be made at some time to form a guild dedicated to him and if it had been allowed to continue it would almost certainly have tried to take on responsibility for celebrations on St. George's day as Corpus Christi Guild did on Corpus Christi Day. Of all the attempted new initiatives this would have been the one most likely to rival the established guilds. A new Guild of the Nativity was eventually authorised in 1439, that of the Shearmen and Fullers (later Shearmen and Tailors). But, so apprehensive were the older guilds and the corporation of newcomers that they obtained a prohibition against further foundations, and no further attempts to form guilds were made in Coventry after this time[88].

Other popular saints in Coventry, to judge from the number of dedications to them of various sorts, were St. John the Baptist, St. Anne and St. Nicholas. There were two churches in Coventry dedicated St. John: the church belonging to Trinity Guild at Bablake and that of St. John's hospital. There were chapels in

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88. CRO, B46.

St. Michael's and Bablake church dedicated to St. John also. One of the four smaller fraternities making up Trinity Guild was dedicated to this saint, of course, to which Bablake church had originally belonged. The membership of Trinity Guild observed all the saint's days, beginning with the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (24 June), which was a general day of the guild. Also observed was the anniversary of St. John before the Latin Gate (6 May) and the Decollation of St. John (29 August)[89]. In the case of St. Anne (26 July), the Charterhouse and the chapel in the grounds of the same monastery were dedicated to her. There were chapels in both parish churches dedicated to her: that in St. Michael's was held by the Girdlers and that in Holy Trinity by the Dyers. And, as we have seen, she was sufficiently popular for journeymen tailors and others to seek to establish a guild under her patronage in the early fifteenth century. There were two dedications to St. Nicholas (6 December): the church belonging to Corpus Christi Guild and an altar in the church of St. John's hospital.

Most of the saints remembered at Coventry were those to whom churches, chapels, guilds, etc., had been dedicated. The dedication day of St. Michael's was 29 September. There were also altars in this church dedicated to St. Laurence (10 August), St. Andrew (30 November) and St. Thomas Becket (29 December). There was an altar to St. Thomas the Apostle (21 December) in Holy Trinity. Another chapel in St. Michael's was dedicated to St. Katherine

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89. Templeman, op. cit., 155, 157.

(25 November)m and the fourth of the smaller fraternities which made up Trinity Guild was also dedicated to this saint. And because it was a general day of the guild, the membership met for a dinner. There was a second altar in St. Andrew's chapel in St. Michael's dedicated to the French saint St. Loye of Noyon (1 December). This chapel belonged to the Smiths, and St. Loye was the patron saint of goldsmiths. The Weavers chapel was jointly dedicated to St. James and St. Christopher, both of whom had 25 July as their day. And the dedication day of St. Margaret's chapel as 20 July.

To look at the devotion the saints is to go right to the heart of popular religion in Coventry. There was a strong emphasis on them, their images and relics. There is little evidence of pilgrimage-going, but this is undoubtedly due to the nature of the surviving sources. Edmund Hadley, a wealthy draper, warden in 1505 and a member of the city council in 1507 and 1508, went on a pilgrimage to St. Anne of Buxton, Derbyshire. In his will of 1511 he bequeathed 8s. 'to be doon [sic] for my pilgrimage to seynt Anne of Boxton', which is the only evidence found of any citizen of Coventry going on a pilgrimage. Hadley was evidently an individual passionately devoted to the saints. He possessed a copy of Jacob de Voraigne's vast compendium of saints' lives, the Golden Legend, which he bequeathed to his son[90]. This was an enormously popular work, being published no fewer than seven times between 1483 and 1527. There is also little evidence

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90. LB, 604, 607, 623; PCC, 7 Fetiplace.

of pilgrims from outside visiting the shrines of the Virgin and St. Osburg in Coventry. From his account book, it is clear that Sir Henry Willoughby of Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire, visited the former with some regularity. This shows that Sir Henry, who held letters of fraternity from the Whitefriars, usually made an offering at the shrine of the Virgin in the Tower chapel whenever he visited. The accounts for late January 1521 list 4d. 'for the oferyng att owre lady att Cowentre' and in early June 1523 another 4d. 'for yowre oferyng at Owre Lady of the Towre'[91]. It is also known that Humphrey Newton of Pownell Hall, Cheshire, visited this shrine and also one at the Charterhouse. A poet, he wrote some of his poetry on the back of pardons which could be obtained by praying at these shrines[92].

Probably the main source of evidence of prevailing attitudes to the saints is the wills. But they must be treated with care. Between 1485 and 1547 75% of all testators included bequests to chapels, altars, shrines, statues, etc. of saints. There is a decline in such bequests from the early 1520s and late 1530s,

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91. W.H. Stevenson, Report on the Manuscripts of Lord Middleton, Preserved at Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire, (Historical Manuscripts Commission, Cd, 5567, HMSO, 1911), 334, 357.

92. Imogen Luxton, 'The Reformation and Popular Culture', in Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day (eds.) Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James 1, (1977), 62.

but this does not necessarily reflect a decline in the place of the saints' cults in the minds of testators. There is a decline in the number and value of most bequests after this time as a result of the economic crisis in Coventry. Bequests reflect the ability of a testator to give as well as his beliefs, and there was an increase in the number of surviving wills belonging to poorer people from the early 1520s. Some allowance must be made for the effect of these factors upon the number of bequests. Bequests are not the only indication of devotion to Mary and the saints, however. This is also reflected in the instructions which testators gave as to their place of burial. Where specific instructions were given between 1485 and 1547 the overwhelming majority of testators requested burial before the altar or image, or in the chapel dedicated to Mary or a saint.

The saints also inspired religious drama, and on at least two occasions the lives of saints were the subject of plays staged in the city. According to the City Annals for 1491, a play of the life of St. Katherine was staged in the Little Park just south of the city. It is not known when it was played, however. The same Annals for 1505 state that a play of St. Christian was staged also in the Little Park. It was played at Pentecost, and was apparently a 'great play called 'Saint Christian's Play', according to a series of depositions proving the majority of a certain Walter Smythe made on 11 January 1528, who was baptised sometime before Pentecost in 1505[93]. Those examined remembered the baptism

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93. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 223, 224; Ingram, op. cit., 127-8, 536.

because of the subsequent play, an event which had clearly made a considerable impression upon them since they could remember it easily some twenty four years later.

Devotion to the saints, more especially Mary, on at least one occasion plunged the whole city into hysteria for several days in the late fifteenth century or early sixteenth. The event is recounted in a letter from Thomas More to John Batmanson, a monk, in 1519 defending his friend Erasmus against Batmanson's attack upon his, Erasmus's, edition of the Greek New Testament. But he is clearly recalling something which happened some years before[94]. He states that he was visiting his sister Margaret in Coventry, who was married to John Rastell of the city. Rastell quitted Coventry for London about 1507 (at which time his name disappears from official records), so the events more described took place before this time. He tells of a Franciscan friar, perhaps of the house in Coventry, who went about the city and its suburbs and the surrounding country preaching that anyone who daily recited the Psalter of the Virgin Mary could not lose his soul. This was 'listened to with favourable ears and readily believed, since it opened up an easy way to heaven'. The local priest did little about this to begin with, thinking that the people would become holier as a result of a greater devotion to the Virgin, even though he believed that the friar was preaching a senseless doctrine. He discovered, however, that the worst sinners among the people were the most pious in reciting the

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94. Elizabeth Francis Rogers (ed.), St. Thomas More: Selected Letters (Yale UP, 1961), 132-135.

Virgin's Psalter, 'because they had assured themselves of the permission to do anything at all without perturbation; there was no good reason to feel uncertain about heaven, for that had been promised to them with a strong assurance by a prominent authority, a friar direct from heaven'.

The priest spoke out against the friar's preaching, warning the people that even if they recited the Psalter ten times a say they had no assurance of heaven. If they recited it well, they could only benefit from it, provided they did not do so with the 'cocksuredness' that some of them were showing. The reaction of the people was to decry the priest as an enemy of the Virgin, and More stated that, when he was making his appeal from the pulpit in one of the churches in the city, the people 'stormed upon him with violent indignation; they hissed and booed him out of the pulpit, and exposed him everywhere to public ridicule'. The next day the friar entered the pulpit and took as his text: 'Deem me worthy of praising thee, O hallowed Virgin; grant me the strength against they enemies'. The people listened eagerly to the friar and were convinced that the priest was a fool and a blasphemer.

More arrived in Coventry at the point when the situation was 'red hot', as he describes it. He had himself hardly been in the city long when he was asked if a person who daily recited the Virgin's Psalter could lose his soul. More's response was to laugh, whereupon he was cautioned that it was dangerous to respond so, for a very holy and learned father was preaching the opposite.

More shrugged the whole thing off as none of his business, but while sitting down to dinner, having been invited by somebody or other, the friar came in and he was sucked in to a discussion of the whole matter. The friar 'babbled on' for the length of almost two sermons. The main thrust of his argument was based entirely on miracles, many of which he quoted from the 'Mariale' and some from another book of a similar sort. When he had finished More told him that he had not made a single convincing argument for those who would deny the miracles he had recounted, and that such denial was reconcilable with the Christian Faith. Even if the miracles he referred to were authentic, there was not sufficient proof for the matter in hand. Despite More's efforts he was 'laughed at as a fool', while the friar 'was lauded to the skies'. He evidently watched developments in the city with some interest after his visit, and told his correspondent that the situation eventually became so bad that it was brought under control only through the most strenuous efforts of the bishop.

More pointed out that his purpose behind the story was to show how people rely too much upon external devotions primarily as a guarantee against hell-fire. His purpose was not to belittle religious life by recounting the 'crimes' of some religious, 'since wholesome as well as poisonous herbs grow in the same soil', nor with the intention of condemning the practise of frequent recitation of the "Hail, Mary". Erasmus criticised the same practises, it seems, and the monk was furious with him for doing

so. This was the reason for More relating the events at Coventry, which he hoped would show the monk what Erasmus was actually criticising: the emphasis on attaining salvation through external observance alone.

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The foregoing sets out the religious year at Coventry, which lay at the heart of religious life in the city. The Reformation was to profoundly alter its form, but before looking at those changes which were imposed upon it, we must consider the changes which were taking place as a result of other forces. The period 1485 to 1547 was one of overall economic decline, during which two periods of especially difficulty can be identified. The first ran from the early 1490s to the late 1500s: the second from the late 1520s to the end of Henry VIII's reign. The period in fact extended beyond 1547 but its effects on the religious life of the city were superseded by those of the Edwardian Reformation.

The result of economic decline was a decline in the number of clergy - regular, parochial, guild and craft - in the city. This had become evident by the late fifteenth century. The decline in the number of clergy will not be discussed here, however, only one of its effects[95]. The decline in the number of priests meant a decline in mass-saying. This in turn may explain the appearance of a striking number of bequests - especially during the two crisis periods just noted - which seem to have been intended to help maintain the number of masses celebrated in the city for the benefit of the inhabitants of Coventry as a

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95. See below, 445-51.

whole, over and above those for the well being of the individual testators and their families. Thus in 1504 Thomas Turner bequeathed 24lbs. of wax to altars in Holy Trinity where mass was said in amounts of 1lb. In 1518 John Haddon bequeathed 6s. 8d. 'to be spent in wax at mass tymes' to the altars of St. Katherine, Hesis, St. Anne, St. Thomas, St. Laurence and the Smiths' altar in St. Michael's. In 1526 Richard Marler bequeathed 2s. and a taper of 1b. to every altar in Holy Trinity 'to be brennyde burned on the same Aulters in the tyme of devyne service'. Both Haddon and Marler had already made lavish provision for their own souls[96].

Another way adopted by testators to maintain the number of masses said in the city was to make bequests to those crafts which maintained priests. Often, if bequests were made to all crafts, those which maintained priests were given more. In 1512 Thomas Churchman bequeathed 6s. 8d. to every craft which maintained a chapel and only 3s. 4d. to those which did not. In 1517 William Pysford the elder bequeathed 6s. 8d. to the Drapers, Shermen and Tailors and Tanners towards their priests' wages and 3s. 4d. to every other craft. The following year John Haddon bequeathed 6s. 8d. to every craft which maintained a priest and 3s. 4d. to every other one. Haddon also left property to the common box of the city on the condition that if it was used for any other purpose then it was to be given

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96. PCC. 32 Bennett; 17 Ayloffe; F20 Porch. For the provision made by Haddon and Marler for their own souls, see above, 82-4

to the Drapers 'to the mayntenaunce of the prest founde among them forever'. By maintaining the number of priests in the city these testators were also supporting the number of masses said in the city[97].

Bequests to maintain the level of masses said in the parish churches reached a peak in the last decade of Henry VIII's reign. Between 1538 and 1547 there are six examples of such bequests. In 1538 Thomas Astleyn gave 4d. to every altar in St. Michael's where mass was said, in 1540 Isabel Wade gave 12d. to every altar where mass was said in the same church as did Roger Palmer in 1544 'to buy some ornament'. In 1546 Richard Dodd gave 12d. to every altar in St. Michael's 'where ther is any masse usually said every weeke and to none other', and the same year Morris Gilbert gave 4d. to every altar in Holy Trinity 'whiche hathe a preyste synginge at it'. Other measures were adopted by the corporation in this latter period but they were bound up with attempts to maintain the Corpus Christi plays[98].

The crafts were threatened in both periods. Those which had traditionally supported pageants were finding it increasingly difficult to continue to do so. The corporation sought to overcome the problem by 'associating' crafts for the purpose of financing the plays, the those which had not before contributed to them were required to do so. The corporation first acted in 1493, when at the Easter Leet it ordered that Chandlers were to

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97. PCC, 15 Fetiplace; 9 Ayloffe; 17 Ayloffe.

98. PCC, 27 Alenger; LJRO, Palmer, Roger, 12/2/44; PCC 6 Alen; LRJO, Gilbert, Morris, 27/4/47.

contribute 2s. each to the support of the Smiths' pageant. Those refusing to do so were to be fined £5 and suffer imprisonment until outstanding contributions and fines had been paid[99].

The corporation appears to have realised quickly that the matter could not be dealt with in a piecemeal way, and that some overall strategy was required. At the following Easter Leet of 1494 general principles were set down. Authority was given to the mayor and his council to force all crafts to contribute to the maintenance of the plays, which, it was stated, 'haue be continued tyme oute of mynde for the worship of the same'. Throughout its legislation the leet's primary concern, so far as the plays were concerned, was their contribution to the 'worship' or honour of the city. The 'associations' were made in order that, 'no persone be oppressed nor put to ferther charge than he conueynyently may bere, and that euery persone withoute fauour be contributory after his substance & faculteez that he vseth to euery charge had & growyng for the welth & worship of the hole body'. Having enunciated principles the leet went on to reiterate its order of the previous year regarding the chandlers and then went further. It ordered that every Chandler and Cook was to contribute 2s. to the maintenance of the Smiths' priest and pageant, upon pain of a fine of 40s. and imprisonment until arrears were paid. This ordinance is to be noted also for its inclusion of the Smiths' priest. As we shall see, the maintenance of priests was considered to be more important than maintaining the pageants[100].

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99. LB, 547.

100. ibid., 556, 555.

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99. LB, 547.

100. ibid., 556, 555.

The swinging fines and threat of imprisonment indicate that importance which the corporation attached to the pageants, as well as, perhaps, the unpopularity of the move. This does not seem to have been because the pageants were themselves unpopular, but because those crafts which had not before contributed to them now found themselves faced with additional financial burdens at a time when they could ill afford them: the economic crisis affected them as well as those crafts already supporting pageants. And some of the crafts called upon to make contributions were among the poorest in the city, and their members could ill afford the sums required of them. This doubtless accounts for the evidence that there were refusals to comply with the corporation's order.

The ordinances were ignored to begin with, and had to be repeated at the Michaelmas Leet of 1494, when it was said that 'dyuers self-willed persones, whech be their willes wold obbeye no other rule ne ordre but after theire owne willes grounded without reason' ignored them. It repeated that, 'all maner Craftes & persones occupying any Crafte within this Cite not beyng charged to eny yerely charge that is had & made in this Cite for the worship of the same, as paiantes & such other, they betwixt this & the fest of seynt Martyn next comyng of their toward lovyng disposicion applye themself to Joyn & vnye themself or to be contributory to other Craft that is charged, as is aforesaid, in relief of theire charge'. The penalties imposed for non-compliance were crippling: individuals who disobeyed the order were to be fined 100s. at the first default, £10 at the second and 20 marks (£13 6s.8d.) at the third. Not surprisingly, the crafts complied[101].

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101. ibid., 558.

On 12 January 1495 the Butchers 'associated' with the Whittawers, agreeing to pay yearly 16s.8d. towards the cost of the latter's pageant. At Easter this year the Skinners and Barbers agreed to contribute 6s.8d. each towards the costs of the Cardmakers' pageant, and the Cappers and Fullers agreed to pay 6s.8d. each to support the Girdlers' priest and pageant. Again the latter sum was to support a priest also. Some individuals still refused to comply with the ordinance, however, and the corporations ordered, at the petition of the Wrights, Tilers and Pinners, that six of their number(named) 'shul-be ioyned & contributorye to the Crafte of the wrights frohensfurthe for euer & to pay & bere yerely after their porcion as other wrights do towardes the charge of their pageant'. The sums were to be paid on the vigil of Holy Trinity, and defaulters were to be fined 6s.8d. the first time and were to suffer imprisonment until the fine was paid. In addition, they were to find surety that they would not default again. They had still not paid their contributions by the time the Michaelmas Leet, when the corporation ordered that they were each to be fined 13s.4d. at every default. The same leet, at the request of the Barbers, ordered 'all leches & soiourns' to contribute to the charges of the former upon pain of a fine of 6s.8d. The Barbers did not own a pageant themselves, and so this seems to be an order that the former should also contribute to the Cardmakers' pageant, which the latter were ordered to do by the previous leet[102].

There is no further evidence of the corporation's intervention in the matter until late in the first decade of the sixteenth century. In

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102. ibid., 559, 565-5, 569.

1507 a number of crafts complained of the so-called 'associations', but to no avail. It was ordered at the Easter Leet of this year that Bakers were to contribute 13s.4d. to the Smiths' pageant, while the Corvisers were to contribute an identical sum to the Tanners'. The Butchers were ordered to pay 16s.8d. towards the Whittawers' pageant 'lyke as they dydde afore'. Complaints continued, however, and at the Easter Leet of 1509 the Corvisers were ordered to carry on paying their contribution of 13s.4d. to the Tanners 'in lyke wise as Maister Ric. Smyth did commande them when he was Meyre (1508) tyll hit be better enqueried of'. It seems this craft had complained the year before as well[103].

The unpopularity of these measures is reflected in 'incentive' bequests made by some wealthy testators in their wills. In 1506 Thomas Bond the elder bequeathed 6s.8d. 'to every craft in Coventre as they Joyned togider by maister Mayre'. In 1517 William Pysford the elder bequeathed 3s.4d. to every craft which contributed to a pageant, 'to the contynuaunce of the laudable customes of the Citie'. Pysford also bequeathed two gowns to be used by the crafts as customes. He bequeathed to the Drapers 'my lyned scralet gowne without ffurre and my Scarlet Cloke to be kept to serve theym in their paionde the tyme of the playes', and to the Tanners, 'my lyned Crymsyn gowne not furred to the same use'. Such incentives, while welcome, probably did little to alter the attitude of most craftsmen and tradesmen towards the 'associations', which they still looked askance at, as causing a drain on their own meagre resources[104].

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103. ibid., 607, 625.

104. PCC, 22 Adeane; 9 Ayloffe.

Despite the problems of maintaining the plays work was still being done on the texts. The City Annals for 1519 state that 'In that year was new playes at Corpus Christityd wich playes were greatly commended[105]. This entıy may be a reference to the introduction of additional plays, or the re-writing of existing ones. Whichever was the case, it is evident that the play cycle was being revised in some way. This is all the more significant given the threat to the plays' continued existence. And this was not the only occasion on which revision of the plays was being carried out at the same time as efforts were being made to ensure their continuance. A major revision took place in the early 1530s, which we will come to in due course.

After 1509 the corporation once again receded into the background. The crisis, for the moment, was ended, but by the late 1520s it was forced to intercede when the plays were threatened for a second time, and this time the situation was worse. The corporation's first step was taken at the Easter Leet of 1524. The Shoemakers had evidently combined with the Tanners, and contributed a mark towards the maintenance of their pageant and priest. However, the former had recently hired a priest of their own, and so wanted to be released of their contribution to the Tanners. The leet granted their request. It was ordered that 'so longe as the Crafte of Shomakers fynde & keip ther preist they shall retyne and keipe in ther handes to ther owne use yeirlie the Marke of money, which thei were wont to pay yeirlie by acte of Leete to the Crafte of Tanners'. This ruling underlines the importance which the corporation attached to the maintenance of priests and the saying of divine service in the city.

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105. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 225.

No doubt the corporation was pleased that the craft was able to afford to do this. The ruling did not come into effect until the following year, however, and the Shoemakers had to make a contribution to the Tanners this year as in previous years, although the normal sum of a mark was halved[106].

Two years later in 1526 the corporation once again faced the hostility on the part of the crafts to combinations for the purpose of maintaining the plays. This year the Carvers were ordered to 'associate' with the Painters. The Painters did not support their own pageant, however, but seem to have contributed to that of the Girdlers; so the Carvers were presumably to contribute now to the Girdlers' pageant as well. Every Carver was to give 12d. a year, upon pain of a fine of 6s.8d. By the same order they were discharged of their contribution to the Carpenters. One Richard Tenwynter, who had failed for some years to make his contributions to the Carpenters, was ordered to pay his arrears[107].

The worsening of the economic situation in this latter period is reflected in the inability of the Weavers by 1529, and the Cardmakers and Saddlers by 1531, to continue to maintain their pageants. In 1529 the Weavers relinquished their pageant to the Cappers, a rising, prosperous occupation. The Cappers became the 'owners' of the Weavers pageant 'with all implements & apparell belonging to the same', while the latter was 'clerlie discharged of ther seid pageant & of their name therof', and in a reversal of roles was to contribute 6s.8d. a year to the

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106. LB, 687-8.

107. ibid., 693.

Cappers to help them maintain the pageant. The following year the Cappers were discharged of their contribution to the Girdlers' pageant, which they had supported since 1495. The same year the Leet reaffirmed its order of three years before, that the carvers should contribute to the Painters' pageant. Why is was necessary to do this is not known. Perhaps the carvers were failing to make their contributions[108].

As we have seen the Cardmakers and Saddlers combined with the Cappers in 1531. The Leet ordinance of this year joining them stated that the maintenance by the latter of their priest and pageant 'haithe been & is yeirlie to the greit charges, cost & expences of the seid company & crafte, beying now but a fewe persones in nomber & havyng but smale eyde of eny other Craft for the same. So that ther said Charge is & like to be more penderous & chargeable to theme then they may convenyentlie bere or susteyn in shorte tyme to come oneless provision for a remedy may be spedilie hadd'. Each member of the newly-combined fellowship was to pay 12d. a year at a time appointed by the masters and keepers of the three occupations, and offer 1d. at high mass on St. Thomas' Day in the chapel'. Some of the crafts which contributed to the maintenance of the Cardmarkers' and Saddlers' pageant were to continue to do. The Painters, for example, were ordered to continue to pay the 8s. a year as they had done before to the combined fellowship. Others were ordered to direct their contributions elsewhere. The Barbers were to pay their 6s.8d. to the Girdlers. The Cappers were also discharged of the responsibility of supporting the Weavers' pageant,

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108. ibid., 697-8, 702.

which craft re-possessed it from the Cappers. The leet ordered that the Walkers should now contribute 6s.8d. to the Weavers' pageant and the Skinners 5s[109].

Despite the problems of maintaining the plays, in 1534 major revisions and possibly some complete re-writing of them were carried out by Robert Croo. The only surviving plays of the Coventry cycle are those of the Weavers' and Shearmen and Tailors'. At the end of the Weavers' it is stated that the play was 'newly translate' on 2 March this year, and at the end of the Shearmen and Tailors' that it was 'neuly correcte' on the 14 March this year. The Drapers' accounts also list a payment for a 'newe play boke' this year, which suggests that the text of its play was also revised or re-written. There is insufficient evidence to be sure, but it is not unlikely that the whole cycle underwent revision this year[110].

The problem of maintaining the plays became steadily worse, and by 1536 the corporation was reduced to extreme measures. In this year the leet ordered that, 'euery householder of this Citie, which is not associat to some Crafte, shal-be associat & bere with some Craft before Whitsontyde next, vpon peyne to be punysshed by the discercion of the meire, etc.'. Such a sweeping ordinance indicates how desparate the situation had become. The circumstances of the Cardmakers and Saddlers had deteriorated further, and in 1537 they were forced to relinquish not only their pageant, but their chapel as well. These were conveyed to

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109. ibid., 707-10, 712-13.

110. H Craig, op. cit., 31, 70; Drapers, CRO, Access. 154, f 7.

the corporation this year, which subsequently granted them to the Cappers, in the way already noted[111].

The problem seems to have reached its peak in the late 1530s, however, and there is not evidence of a serious problem facing the plays thereafter. There were a few 'associations' in the 1540s, but not on the previous scale. In 1542 the Tilers combined with the Coopers and Pinners, while the Carpenters were ordered to continue their contributions to the latter 'after such porcion & rate as thei haue been accustomed in tymes passed'. At the Easter Leet of 1547 the Coopers, Tilers and Pinners were ordered to 'associate' with each other, and the positions of five years previously were now reversed. The Coopers were to be 'the hedd & cheffest of them & stand charged with the pageaunt'. The final act by the leet to force one craft to amalgamate with another was in 1553, when the barbers were discharged from their yearly contributions to the Girdlers' pageant. This may indicate that the Girdlers were recovering, or that the Barbers could no longer afford to make the contribution[112].

The economic decline of the city affected the religious guilds as well as the crafts. Corpus Christi Guild suffered more than Trinity, and a major event of the period between 1485 and 1547 is the decline and eventual collapse of this guild in the mid-1530s, by which time it found that it could not longer function as a independent institution. At the Michaelmas Leet of 1535 it was agreed by a majority of the inner council

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111. LB, 724, 726, 767.

112. ibid., 782, 803, 805.

(twenty to four) that 'Corpus Christi gilde shal-be annexed & vnyte vnto the Trinitie gilde & maid boithe on after suche ordynaunce as the meire, recorder & the councell of the Citie shall dyvyse, so that it may stand with the order of the lawe'[113]. A similar process was adopted to that used for the crafts, though there was one difference: Corpus Christi Guild amalgamated rather than 'associated' with Trinity Guild. Despite this, there does not appear to have been any disruption of the Corpus Christi procession which continued. The Corpus Christi Guild account book continued to list receipts from the guild's lands and expenses taken out of them for their upkeep and for the upkeep of the ceremonial aspects of the guild, in particular the Corpus Christi procession. What disappears from the account book are the receipts of the brethren, which were probably entered in the Trinity Guild accounts. The maintenance of the procession like the plays was assured by the joining of resources of like institutions.

Such efforts which the corporation made, as well as the efforts of individuals to maintain the number of masses, priests and the Corpus Christi Day celebrations, were merely stop-gaps. The underlying trend was still one of decline. And the same was true of the rest of the ceremonial year at Coventry: the economic situation would not permit it to continue at its present level of expenditure. Severe cutbacks were necessary if the citizens were not to be bankrupted. Many in the city were holding on to the traditional sequence of ceremonies and customs and would not let go, however, as the following letter reveals. It was

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113. ibid., 722-3.

written by William Cotton, the mayor of Coventry, as he reached the end of his year in office on 27 January 1539. The letter was addressed to Cromwell, and concerned the traditional, and to his way of thinking, unnecessary, charges incumbent upon office-holders in the straightened economic circumstances of the later 1530s. It echoes much of what Humphrey Reynolds said some seven years previously. Cotton claimed that the charges were 'the occasion of the decay & pouertie of the said Citie'. He pointed out that the 'priuate charges' of offices 'myght be right well spared & dymynysshed', for they ruined those who held them. On Candlemas Day, for example, when the new mayor was sworn in, he 'feasteth such nomber of Citizens & Straungers that with thexpenses then he myght more then convenyentlie nedeth he myght well keipp his house half a yeire after'. Similarly, 'on Mydsomer even & on seynt peters even the maisters & Kepers of Craftes vse suche excesse in expences in drynking that some suche as be worthe £5 in goodes shalbe then at 40s. charges to ther vndoyng'. It was not only office holders who suffered, however. Cotton was at pains to point out that, 'at Corpus Christi tide the poore Comeners be at suche charges with ther playes & pagyontes that their fare the worse all the yeire after... Moche exclamacion is maid to me beyng meire by the comeners for the reformacion therin'. But he was unable to do anything, for his fellow councillors would not support him: 'Meny of my seid bretherne beyng past all such offices & charges to litle regarde theme that be to come ner do not esteme the vndoyng of half a dosen honest Comeners to be so ill a deid as is the omyttyng & lesyng of an accustomed drynkyng'. Cotton asked Cromwell, therefore, to

'directe your letters vnto vs for the reformacion of the same excessive charges'. If Cromwell replied, his letter has not survived[114].

Little was done until the pressures of the economic circumstances forced curtailment of these ceremonial occasions. By the early 1540s Trinity Guild was in difficulties. Since most of its records have perished our knowledge is restricted, and rests upon surviving fragments of the records and some printed excerpts from them. An ordinance passed on 6 September 1542, however, decreed, 'That no obite, drynkyng, or comen assemblie, from henceforth shall be had or used at bablake, except onelie on Trinitie even & on the day, which shall be used as it haith bein in tymes past. And that also the Prists of babelack shall say dirge on midsumer even, and likewise masse of requiem on the morrowe, as they have used to doo. And that the Meire shall not come down thether to dirge over night for dyvers considerations & other great bisyness they used. And on the morowe thei to go toether to masse and brekefast as thei have used to doe'. This was a severe curtailment of the guild's social activities: from henceforth only one general day would be held by the guild. Trinity Sunday was doubtless chosen because the four smaller fraternities were known collectively as Trinity Guild. In addition, the dedication day of the guild church of St. John the Baptist would be observed. All other gatherings of the guild were to cease[115].

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114. SP/1/142, f56.

115. Poole, op. cit., 211.

Some idea of the extent of the guild's social calendar for a year and, therefore, the effect of this ordinance, may be gained from the accounts of 1532-33, which have survived. The year runs from October to October. On St. Luke's Day (18 October) the new master of the guild was sworn in, an event accompanied by celebratory drinking. St. Katherine's Day (25 November) was celebrated soon afterwards. On New Year's Day a collation was provided for the clerks and priests of the guild. There followed the obit of Nicholas Burwey and his wife. Food and drink was provided for an assembly on Midlent Sunday 1533, the fourth Sunday after Shrove Tuesday, which was 23 March that year. The second general day of the guild was the Annunciation (25 March). This was followed on 6 May by the obit of Richard Spicarre, which was also the anniversary of St. John before the Latin Gate. The obits of Philip Fyrfields and his wife and that of John Whalley and his wife on the day after Ascension day, which was 23 May. The third general day, Trinity Sunday, followed on 8 June, and shortly after the combined celebrations of Midsummer's Eve and the Nativity of St. John the Baptist on 24 June. There was also an assembly on the Assumption of Our Lady (15 August) and the Decollation of St. John the Baptist (29 August). Food and drink were supplied for yet another assembly on St. Matthew's Day (21 September). The last assembly was at Michaelmas (29 September) when the warden of Bablake and the priests and clerks paid their fines. The total cost of these many assemblies was £10 13s.11d.[116].

In the mid-and late-1540s the excessive expenditure of Midsummer's and St. Peter's Days came under attack. At the Easter Leet of 1545 it

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116. Templeman, op. cit., 152-160.

was ordered that 'the meir & Shireffes shall fromehensfurther keipp ther drynkynges on Midsomer nyght & saynt Peters nyght befor the watche & not after as haithe been vsed in tymes past'. The significance of this order is that it shortened the time available for drinking and therefore the amount spent on such occasions by the citizens. Four years later in 1549 the watch on St. Peter's Day was scrapped altogether. The Easter Leet of this year ordered that 'wher-as in tymes past Maister Meire for the tyme being haithe vsed to keipp a watche on Midsomer nyght, and the Shireffes another watche on seynt Peters nyght. It is now enacted that Maister Meire & the Shireffes shall fromehensfurthe yoyntelie keipp onelie oon watche on Midsomer nyght at the indeferent costes & charges of Maister Meire & the Shireffes. That is the meire to pay the on half & the Shireffes the other half'. Such measures would probably have been welcomed by Cotton as positive steps to reduce the charges upon office holders[117].

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The criticisms of religious life before the Reformation are well known: a multiplication of masses, especially 'private' ones, an almost idolatrous devotion to the saints, a great excess of observances, as well as many special devotions, and a preoccupation with externals, so that the teachings of the Scriptures had allegedly receded into the background as almost to disappear. These shortcomings were made much of by the reformers, but, as we have seen, the citizens of Coventry clung to these ways up to the end of Henry VIII's reign. It is important to

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117. LB, 779,791.

appreciate this, if the impact of the Reformation on every-day religious life is to be appreciated: the reform of the devotional system, because it went to the very heart of the way in which the people practised their religion, had perhaps a more profound effect than any other single element of the Reformation.

The changes in religious life began in earnest in 1536, with Convocation in July, the Ten Articles of the same month and the subsequent first royal injunctions of August. Some attention had been paid to the form of religious observance prior to this time, such as the proclamation of 6 March 1529 against heretical books, many of which criticised the ceremonies of the Church[118], and the Supplication of the Commons against the Ordinaries of 1532, which went into some detail about the excessive number of holy days. It was not until 1536, however, that steps were taken to impose actual reforms rather than merely offer criticism. These first steps coincided with the period when Coventry's traditional practices were under extreme pressures as a result of the economic recession. There were undoubtedly those in Coventry who welcomed a curtailing or reduction of the number of ceremonies, holy days, etc., for no other reason that that the expenses of the religious year would be reduced.

To begin with, certain holy days were altered and others abrogated by Convocation. All church dedication feasts were to be observed on the first Sunday in October. The feasts of patron saints could still be observed, but all might work on such days. All holy days were forbidden

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118. Tudor Royal Proclamations, 3 vols, eds. P. L. Hughes and F Larkin, (Yale UP, 1964-69), I, 181-96.

in harvest time, from 1 July to 29 September and in the three law terms, except feasts of the Apostles, Our Lady and St. George, Ascension Day, the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, All Hallows and Candlemas. The Ten Articles did not refer specifically to these alterations, but it did state the right of the Supreme Head to 'mitigate' and 'moderate' holy days. The royal injunctions referred directly to them, but did not list them, and ordered the clergy to 'persuade' their parishoners to observe the changes.

The impact of these changes is difficult to assess. Certainly, the observance of a number of holy days was abolished or altered. The Weavers chapel was dedicated to St. James (25 July) and there was an altar dedicated to St. Lawrence (10 August) in St. Michael's. These saints' days, as well as St. Michael's (29 September) itself, fell during harvest time. The Butchers were a fraternity dedicated to St. Anthony (17 January) and held their annual dinner on St. Luke's Day (18 October). The new master of Trinity Guild was sworn in on and his day also. There was an altar dedicated to St. Andrew (30 November) in St. Michael's, the Smiths observed St. Loye's Day (1 December), who was their patron saint, Corpus Christi Guild's church was dedicated to St. Nicholas (6 December), an altar to St. Thomas the Apostle (21 December) was in Holy Trinity, the Tilers held their annual dinner on St. Stephen's Day (26 December) and there was an altar to St. Thomas the Martyr (29 December) in St. Michael's, all of which days fell in law terms[119].

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119. The days observed in the law terms are taken from a list in C. R. Cheney (ed.), Handbook of Dates for Students of English History, (1978), 65.

Though these days were officially altered or abolished there is, of course, no certainty that the inhabitants of Coventry ceased to observe them. For example, the Weavers' accounts show that St. James' Day continued to be kept up to the end of Henry VIII's reign[120]. And some days were subsequently restored. By a proclamation on 22 July 1541, however, the feasts of St. Mark (25 April), St. Luke and Mary Magdalene (22 July) were reinstated[121].

Images were a primary concern in the subsequent second royal injunctions of September 1538. Much had been said in the Ten Articles of 1536 about images and the 'honouring' and 'praying' to saints, which was reinforced by the first royal injunctions. The emphasis of these documents was to explain the true significance of saints, their images and relics and to avoid abuse and superstition which had developed around them or might do so. By 1538 the position had shifted, and there was open hostility to them, so much so that royal injunctions of this year ordered the pulling down of all images 'abused with pilgrimages or offerings of anything made thereunto', to prevent men falling into the detestable offence of idolatry.

Two images in Coventry were pulled down by Dr. London in late October 1538, when he was in the city to take the surrender of the two friaries. On 22 October he wrote one of his many progress reports to Cromwell, informing him, 'I have here layd down the idolatrye of two chapells wher offering wasse to an Image of our Lady and to a rode'.

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120. CRO, Weavers, Access. 100/17/1.

121 Tudor Royal Proclamations, I, 301-2.

These are clear references to the image of the Virgin in the Tower chapel near the Whitefriars and the Rood chapel, built by the Pysford family, adjoining the Greyfriars church[122]. St. Osburg's shrine in the cathedral was apparently not touched at this time, perhaps because London's authority did not yet extend to the priory. There was apparently no local opposition to the destruction of these images, however, verbal or otherwise. No further evidence has survived, e.g. in churchwardens' accounts, of the work of removing images from the churches in Coventry as a result of the injunctions.

Then on 16 November 1538 a proclamation was issued, which, amongst other things, removed St. Thomas Becket's Day (29 December) from the calendar. He was no longer to be known as a saint, his images and pictures throughout the whole realm were to be removed from churches and chapels and other places, the days used as festivals in his name were no longer to be observed and services, offices, antiphons, collects and prayers in his name were to be removed from the books[123]. This would have had some effect upon the year at Coventry, since a chapel and altar dedicated to St. Thomas the Martyr was found in St. Michael's, which belonged to the Cappers. There was evidently some delay in the city's compliance with this proclamation. St. Thomas' Day was one of the four quarterage days for the Weavers, and the craft's accounts regularly list 'receipts' on 'Sent Thomas Day at the Chappell for offryng' up to 1539. Since the accounts ran from 13 October to 12 October this entry

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122. SP/1/137, f259.

123. Tudor Royal Proclamations, I, 270-76.

must record offerings made on St. Thomas' Day 1538. There are no similar entries in subsequent accounts, which suggests compliance with the proclamation[124]. However, individual citizens were apt to forget the demotion of St. Thomas Becket: when Julian Nethermyll made his will on 8 January 1539 he bequeathed 3s.4d. to St. Thomas' altar in his parish church of St. Michael's[125]. Though holy days might be dispensed with immediately on paper, it took longer for people to remove them from their minds.

Having conformed to the proclamation, St. Michael's and especially the Cappers were left with an undedicated chapel. It seems, however, that the problem was overcome by simply choosing another saint, in this case St. Nicholas. In 1541 Hugh Laughton, a capper, bequeathed 8d. to St. Nicholas' altar in St. Michael's. An altar dedicated to this saint in this church is not referred to in surviving sources prior to this time. Five years later a John Lawton, also a capper, but apparently no relation, bequeathed 6d. 'to seint nicolas Aulter (in the) cappers chappell'[126]. The inhabitants of Coventry showed a remarkable ability to adapt to the situation upon them. And, as before, there is no evidence that they offered any opposition to the proclamation.

In mid-January 1539 Dr. London was back in Coventry to take the surrender of the priory and Charterhouse. The loss of the priory also meant the loss of St. Osburg's shrine in the cathedral. Her relics,

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124. CRO, Weavers, Access. 100/17/1.

125. PCC, 6 Alenger.

126. LJRO, Laughton, Hugh, 11/10/41; Lawton, John, 27/4/47.

along with all the rest preserved by the monks, were sent to London, including 'A Relique of Saynt Thomas of Canterburie parte syluer & part Copper', which had evidently not been removed the previous November in accordance with the de-canonisation of this saint[127]. The Weavers' accounts for 1539 record the usual expenses of St. Osburg's Day, but they probably refer to the celebration of 1538. No mention of them is made in the 1540 accounts which should include expenses for St. Osburg's Day in 1539. It is perhaps not surprising that, with the surrender of the priory and the destruction of her shrine, the celebrations on this day ceased. The Weavers continued to hold their annual general meeting on St. Osburg's Day, however.

The loss of saints' days would have meant little to those citizens who had ignored them and other holy days, preferring to spend their time in an ale-house in the city. The economic decline of Coventry led to increased unemployment and poverty, which in turn apparently caused increasing numbers of inhabitants to resort to 'compensatory drinking'. As we have seen, in 1532 Humphrey Reynolds referred in his supplication to the unemployed in the city and their frequenting of inns and ale-houses 'when they have goten n peny to spende it', where, 'havvng little or nothyng to lose care not what Invencons they Imagyne'[128]. Reynolds does not mention this fact, but some inhabitants were visiting ale-houses during the time of divine service on Sundays and on

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127. BL, Egerton MS 2603 no.17, fos. 26-7.

128. See above, 61.

holy days. The problem was a long-standing one, for the first indication of it comes from a case against an innholder, Robert Nicolls, who had been found selling ale on a Sunday during divine service in 1524. The city council ordered that he should have 'his gauge dd. distr. [sic]' for the offence[129]. By the late 1530s the problem was widespread, and the Easter Leet of 1539 passed an ordinance that 'no Inholder or alehouse-keeper shall frome hensfurth permytt or suffer any person or persones of this Citie to sitt or be in ther housez at brekefastes or drynkynges at Matyns, high masse, or evensong tymes on the Sondays or holydayes', upon pain of a fine of 3s. 4d.[130].

The timing of this ordinance is interesting, for only the previous year Roland Lee, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, had drawn special attention to this problem in his injunctions to the clergy of his diocese. One article went to considerable lengths to point out the 'abominable, detestable, devilish use and custom, that upon the holy-days, in the time of Divine Service and preaching, that youth and other unthrifts resort to ale-houses, and there use unlawful games, blasphemy, drunkenness and other enormities, so that good people therat be offended, and no punishment had as yet'. He commanded his clergy 'to declare to such that keep ale-houses or taverns within your parish, that at such they suffer no more unlawful and ungodly assemblies, nor

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129. BL, Harleian MS. 7571, f31.

130. LB, 739.

to receive such persones to bolling and drinking at such seasons in their houses, under pain of the King's high displeasure'[131]. Such exhortations to the innholders and ale-house keepers probably had little effect: there was no coercive power in the injunctions. But the city's stern ordinance of the following year (already noted) would have made it enforceable. There is nothing to suggest that the ordinance was passed as direct result of the injunctions, but it certainly added considerable weight to the appeal of the clergy in the city to desist from opening during divine service on Sundays and on holy days. One wonders if the clergy ever invoked this ordinance; but, intentionally or not, the secular authorities were working hand in hand with the ecclesiastical.

The problem was not helped by the increase in the number of ale-houses in the city, which resulted in an unprecedented spate of bye-laws on drinking in the 1540s and early 1550s. In 1544, and again in 1546 and 1547, it was claimed by the leet that there was an excessive number of alehouses in the city and that many inhabitants had forsaken their previous occupations to become brewers and tipplers, 'Whereby almightie God is highlie displeased, the comen-Welthe of this Citie greatlie decayed, and vice, Idelnes, & other innumerable mycheves norisshed and encreased'. It was ordered that after Pentecost following any person selling ale without licence of the mayor and justices of the peace was to be

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131. W.M. Frere (ed.), Visitation Articles And Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation 3 vols. (Alcuin Club Collections, XIV, XV, XVI, 1910), II, 22-3.

fined 40s. a month. The reaffirmation of the ordinance in subsequent years indicates that it was largely ignored. In 1547 every alderman was also instructed to make a book containing a list of all inns and alehouses in his ward, from which the mayor and justices would consider which were to be suppressed. It was also ordered this year that 'noo Journeyman or prentyse vpon any worke daye shall from hensforthe resorte to any Inne, taverne, or alehouse to eate or drynke, vpon peyne of ymprysonmente by the space of oone day and oone night'. The situation worsened, and in 1552 it was claimed that the excessive number of alewives in the city was 'encreasinge dailye more and more' and 'all kyndes of vicesses be norysshed' as a result. It was ordered that those who brewed ale and beer were not to sell it and, conversely, those who sold were not to brew. Innholders were excepted from the ordinance, however. The ordinance differentiated between inns where people were lodged and alehouses where ale and beer were supplied to anyone, and in this it followed the recent Act of Parliament. Those who disobeyed the order were to suffer imprisonment 'at the will and pleasure' of the mayor and justices and were to be fined also 20s. a week for every week they were found in disobedience of the order, and the fine was to be levied on the goods and chattels of offenders if necessary[132].

The problem remained despite such efforts by the city council, and towards the end of the 1550s was out of hand again. In 1555 the ordinance of 1539 was repeated, although there was no mention of

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132. LB, 770-73, 781, 785-86, 801-2.

holy days. It was ordered that 'no ale-howse keeper or other vytayler in thys Cytye soeffer any inhabitauntes of the Cytye to eate or drynke in ther howses in service tyme on the Sabott daye'. An indication of the extent of the problem compared with sixteen years previously may be had from the fines imposed for breaking the ordinance. This time offenders were to be fined 20s, compared with only 3s. 4d. in 1539. This suggests that the problem had got badly out of hand by Mary's reign[133].

The reasons given for abrogating holy days were not only religious. There were fears about the potential for social disorder of large gatherings, which is reflected in complaints, ordinances and proclamations. The Supplication of the Commons against the Ordinaries referred to the 'many great, abominable, and execrable vices, idle and wanton sports' which were 'used and exercised' on holy days. Convocation four years later in 1536 described them as the occasion of 'excess, riot and superfluity'. Another concern was with the loss of working days. Convocation in 1536 chose to abolish holy days which fell in harvest time (when all should be busy bringing in the harvest instead of wasting good weather) and those which fell in one of the three law terms, when unnumerable holy days constantly interrupted business.

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133. ibid., 812.

Holy days were the cause of 'much sloth and idleness, the very nurse of thieves, vagabonds, and divers other unthriftynes and inconveniences as decay of good misteries and arts'[134]. Laying blame on holy days for social and economic decay was to misunderstand what was happening in the country. Ironically, the abrogation of holy days probably led to greater unemployment, since the number of working days was substantially increased while the amount of work available was decreasing.

The ceremonies of the Church were little altered during Henry VIII's reign, though their significance was on several occasions redefined. The ninth of the Ten Articles of 1536 dealt with ceremonies, describing them 'as things good and laudable, to put us in remembrance of those spiritual things that they do signify'. It was stressed, however, that none of the ceremonies had power to remit sin. The subsequent royal injunctions referred to 'certain laudable ceremonies, rites and usages of the Church meet and convenient to be kept and used for a decent and politic order in the same', but the clergy were to declare to their parishioners that they were not necessary for their salvation. The proclamation of 16 November 1538 prohibiting unlicensed printing of Scripture, exiling anabaptists, depriving married clergy and removing St. Thomas Becket from the calendar referred to contention in the realm about the ceremonies,

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134. The social and economic reasons for abrogating holy days have been pointed out by Joyce Youngs, Sixteenth Century England, (1984), 187-89.

and commanded the people to keep all ceremonies accustomed to be used in the Church, unless they were abrogated or abolished by the king. Again the warning was given that they were 'good and laudable ceremonies tokens, and signs to put us in remembrance of things of higher perfection, and none otherwise, and not to repose any trust of salvation in them'[135]. Another proclamation was issued on 26 February 1539 which explained certain rites and ceremonies of the Church, and exhorted the people to keep them, with the now usual warning that they were not to be superstitiously abused[136].

Some ceremonies were actually abolished by the proclamation of 22 July 1541. It referred to the 'many superstitious and childish observations' kept on the feasts of St. Nicholas, St. Catherine, St. Clement and Holy Innocents, when 'children be strangely decked and appareled to counterfeit priests, bishops, and women, and so be led with songs and dances from house to house, blessing the people and gathering of money, and boys do sing mass and preach in the pulpit, with such othe unfitting and inconvenient usages, rather to the derision than to any true glory of God, or honor of his saints'[137]. Such ceremonies were

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135. Tudor Royal Proclamations, loc. cit. A copy of the proclamation addressed to the mayor, bailiffs and communalty of Coventry is extant. See CRO, A79/29.

136. Tudor Royal Proclamations. I, 278-80.

137. ibid., 301-2.

therefore proscribed. The feast of the boy-bishop, a popular one at Coventry, was thus removed from the city's religious year. This was presumably a notable event and it would have affected individuals as well as the community as a whole; for the abrogation of the feast of the boy-bishop also resulted in the loss of prayers for the souls of Joan Semans (and her husband) and Thomas Wyldegresse, and any others who had requested the boy-bishop and his attendants to say De profundis for their souls at this time in the year[138]. This is yet another example of the 'knock-on' effect of changes.

The existence of Purgatory was accepted, although reservations had been expressed about its existence. As early as 1534 Cranmer forbade the clergy to preach about Purgatory. The Ten Articles of 1536 also expressed reservations, but accepted the utility of prayers for the dead. The injunctions of 1538, and Convocation in 1543 took a similar view, although in the latter case Cranmer succeeded in having included the important provision that prayers should not beoffered for specific souls but for all Christian people, thereby challenging the idea of 'private' masses.

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The changes begun during Henry VIII's reign were not completed until Edward VI's. In the first months of the new reign the demotion of the saints was completed. All images were ordered to be removed from churches by the injunctions to the clergy of July 1547, 'so that there remain no memory of the same in walls, glass windows,

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138. See above, 162.

or elsewhere in their churches or houses'. Although veneration of the saints was not officially condemned until the end of Edward's reign, the loss of images, etc., almost certainly had a more powerful effect upon popular beliefs than government directives. The stripping out of the churches of the shrines, images, pictures and paintings, etc., almost over-night, was the strongest argument against the intercession of saints. There is evidence, however, that in Coventry the injunctions were apparently not implemented immediately, or not all all. The Smiths' accounts for 1548 contain the cryptic entry, 'payd for takyng down of our imagys afor myghalmas and settyng them up agayne, 4d.'[139]. Does this suggest that the craft removed the images in its chapel in St. Michael's only temporarily, or moved them elsewhere, rather than destroying them as the injunctions ordered?

There is evidence of resistance to the Edwardian changes from the craft accounts. The injunctions forbade all lights but two on the high altar, but the Cappers' and Drapers' accounts contain entries which show clearly that they continued to purchase candles for their chapels throughout Edward VI's reign. The Cappers' accounts reveal that in 1549 5d. was paid 'for 2lb. of Candell', in 1550 4d. was paid 'for candells for ye chappell', in 1551 3½d. was paid 'for peasse strawe and for candell' and in

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139. Reader, c7, f83.

1552 4½d. was paid 'for candells for ye Chappell'[140]. The Drapers' accounts contain similar payments: in 1548 12½d. was 'payd for a pond of candyll for the chapell'; in 1549 4½d. 'for ii pond of candyll'; in 1550 5d. 'for ii pond of candyll' and 1551 9d. 'for 2lb. of candyll for the chappell'[141]. There is no account for 1552. This openly flouted the Injunctions of 1547. If at least one, possibly two, crafts ignored the Edwardian changes as far as they thought possible, there were probably others as well, and such defiance of the Edwardian Reformation shows it was unwelcome to some of the institutions in the city and not just to individuals.

The injunctions to the clergy of 1547 also forbade processions in any parish church, about the church or churchyard or any other place. Some of the days marked at Coventry with a procession are known through the accounts of the religious guilds, which list payments for 'crossbearers' and 'torchbearers' on St. George's Day, Shere Thursday, Ascension, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, Corpus Christi Day, of course, which was probably the most lavish of all, Midsummer's Eve and Holy Rood Day[142]. There were undoubtedly other procession-days as well, which the surviving fragments of guild accounts do not record. For example, Palm Sunday was generally marked by an elaborate procession about churchyards and parish churches throughout England, as were processions marking Holy Saturday and

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140. Cappers accounts, ff74, 77, 80, 82.

141. Drapers', CRO, Access. 154 (Daffern), ff26, 27, 28, 29.

142. Sharpe, Dissertation, 161; Poole, op. cit., 211; CRO, A6, passim.

Rogation. All, but especially Corpus Christi, were high points in the city's liturgical year, and they were swept away almost overnight. Their loss would have created a vacuum, which must have been keenly felt by the citizens.

The economic importance of the city's ceremonial calendar for tradesmen and craftsmen has already been stressed. The sudden and complete prohibition of former processions must have been a further blow to tradesmen and craftsmen who were already suffering from the city's depressed economy. Coventry would henceforward attract fewer people to see the spectacle and pageantry surrounding religious festivals. The Corpus Christi Day plays survived, but the Day must have been a pale reflection of its former self. There is no traceable connection between the decline of Corpus Christi Day and of the Corpus Christi fair which followed, but on 3 March 1552 Coventry was granted licence to hold a second annual fair of three days, on 21, 22 and 23 October[143]. There were many factors contributing to the city's economic decline in this period, but it is possible that the loss of the Corpus Christi Day and other processions played a part. Perhaps that second annual fair (in October) was intended to compensate for the decline of the Corpus Christi fair which had resulted from the disappearance of the great procession.

The changes in Church ceremonies took a little longer. The injunctions of 1547 directed the clergy to instruct their parishioners

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143. CPR Edward VI, IV , 380.

not to 'break and violate the laudable ceremonies of the church, by the king commanded to be observed, and not yet abrogate'. They were also to ensure that their parishioners did not superstitiously abuse such ceremonies by believing them to secure salvation. For some the process was too slow, and on 6 February 1548 a proclamation was issued prohibiting private innovations in ceremonies. It stated that 'certain private curates, preachers, and other laymen, contrary to their bounden duties of obedience, do rashly attempt of their own and singular wit and mind... not only to persuade the people from the old and accustomed rites and ceremonies but also themself bringeth in new and strange orders... according to their fantasies'[144]. Extremists posed a problem to a government seeking to introduce changes slowly (perhaps so as not to promote a reaction against them). Nevertheless, the government did not punish those who ceased to observe old ceremonies.

The real changes came with the introduction of the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549. This omitted most ceremonies, though some insignificant ones and some personal ones were still permitted and, above all, substituted English for Latin in all services. Shortly after the introduction of the first Book of Common Prayer articles were issued to the clergy informing them of further abrogated ceremonies and rites. They were instructed not to 'counterfeit the popish mass', and certain ceremonies which were thought to do this were prohibited. A general exhortation was given to the clergy not to use other ceremonies 'than are appointed in the

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144. Tudor Royal Proclamations, I, 416-17.

king's book of common prayers, or kneeling, otherwise than is in the said book'. Moreover, no one was to 'maintain purgatory, invocation of saints, the six articles, beadrolls, images, relics, lights, holy bells, holy beads, holy water, palms, ashes, candles, sepulchres, paschal, creeping to the cross, hallowing of the font of the popish manner, oil, chrism, altars, beads, or any other such abuses, and superstitions'. This was a comprehensive abrogation of ceremonies of the Catholic Church, and again the clergy were exhorted to use no forms of worship 'contary to the king's majesty's proceedings'. The second book of common prayer of 1552 went even further. The order of communion service was arranged so no resemblance to the mass remained, vestments were abolished (only a white surplice was permitted) and altars became communion tables. The impact of these changes upon the inhabitants of Coventry is not indicated in the surviving records, which unfortunately tend to concern themselves with the process of change and not reactions to it. There can be little doubt that they had no small effect upon them, however, since the majority of citizens had clung to the traditional ways to the end of Henry VIII's reign.

Some things survived throughout Edward's reign. Of these the most important was the Corpus Christi plays, which survived without apparent interruption, as the accounts of the crafts which supported the pageants on this day (Cappers, Drapers and Weavers) show, but there must have been some alteration to their eucharistic theology because of the new regime. Perhaps the Mercers' play, which was concerned with the death and Assumption of Mary was

dropped in Coventry, as elsewhere. The accounts of this craft have unfortunately not survived before 1579, and so we do not know what happened to its pageant, but its demise would have been a serious blow to the crafts's prestige in the city. Some of the secular observances continued unscathed, such as the marching of the watch on Misdummer's Eve. As we have seen, that on St. Peter's Day was scrapped in 1549[145]. The Hock Tuesday play and the custom of 'hocking' also appears to have continued without change through Edward's reign, as does May Day and other 'pagan' survivals, and in fact survived well into Elizabeth's reign until puritans denounced them.

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Almost before the Edwardian changes has been completed Edward VI died and his sister Mary acceded to the throne. The Protestant reformation was halted and Catholicism restored as the country's official religion. In 1553 certain Edwardian statutes were repealed, including 'An act for the keeping of holy days and fasting days' of 1552. On 4 March 1554 a proclamation ordered all manner of Church processions and ceremonies to be continued after the old order of the Church in Latin[146]. All holy days and fast days were to be observed as were kept in the latter time of Henry VIII and all ceremonies as were used in the Church were to be kept once more. Catholicism

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145. See above, 207.

146. Tudor Royal Proclamations, II, 35-38.

was eventually wholly restored by the decrees of the synod of clergy convened by Pole in the winter of 1555.

Unfortunately, the lack of evidence, particularly churchwardens' and craft accounts, make it difficult to trace in detail the Marian restoration in this particular area of popular religion and culture. The mass was restored, of course, and with that the types of bequests which testators made in the last years of Henry VIII's reign begin to appear in the Marian wills, that is bequests to altars where mass was said. Whereas in Henry's reign these bequests were attempts to preserve the old order, in Mary's they were probably designed to encourage it to start up again. In 1554 Richard Coly bequeathed 4d. to every altar in Holy Trinity 'that masse is seide at'. In 1557 John a Layne gave 4d. to every chapel in the same church where mass was said. Other encouragements of this sort include the bequest of William Westley, who bequeathed an unknown sum (his will is illegible) to every altar in St. Michael's 'where lyght ys accustomable keppte' in 1558[147].

The ceremonies of the old Church were restored, and the dramatisation of the liturgical year began once again. The Drapers' accounts show that the enactment of the resurrection from the Easter Sepulchure on Easter Sunday was restored to the churches. The accounts for 1556 record a payment of 13s. 'for ii taperys

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147. LJRO, Coly, Richard, 14/10/58, Layne, John 7/2/58, Westley, William, 28/11/58.

for the Sepullker & wacx for the awtter all the yere'. In 1557 5s. was paid to John Eddes 'for ii capperers for the Sepullcar'. A similar entry is found in the accounts for 1558[148]. The sepulchure referred to was probably not the one which was provided by St. Michael's, but a smaller representation in the Drapers' chapel for the benefit of the craft fellowship. Nonetheless, it is still an indication that this ceremony had been re-established in the city at this time, and suggests that others had been as well.

It is also clear from the craft accounts that the Corpus Christi procession was restored. The Smiths' accounts for 1554 list a payment of 2s. 6d. 'to the mynstrells for prosesyon and pageants' this year[149]. The plays had, of course, continued right through Edward's reign, and it is likely that any changes which were made to conform to Protestant theology were removed. The procession would hardly have resembled its former glory, however, for the Chantries Act of 1547 was not reversed by Mary's first parliament, because of awkward questions of property, and so the guilds, in particular Corpus Christi, were not restored. Presumably, the procession was made up of only the crafts from this time onwards. The magnificent spectacle of the occasion was undoubtedly lost.

The colour to the city's ceremonial occasions was returned by a series of ordinances concerning dress passed by the Michaelmas

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148. Drapers, CRO, Access 154 (Daffern), ff35, 38, 41.

149. Sharpe, Dissertation, 164.

leet of 1555. As well as the mayor and sheriffs for the time being, all others who had been mayor or sheriff and their wives were to wear their scarlet gowns 'Vppon principall dayes & dayes accustomed accordinge to auncyent vse', upon pain of a fine of 20s. Every alderman was to wear a velvet tippet every Sunday and other 'principall' day, upon pain of a 10s. fine. The sheriffs were also to have their sergeants with their manes goe before them and their yeomen when they were out of their houses'. And on Midsummer's Eve every aldermen and sheriff able to ride was to accompany the mayor in the marching of the watch on this night. They were to be dressed in their scarlet gowns and each have a man waiting upon them with a torch, upon pain of a fine of 20s[150]. With the restrictions on processions and ceremonials lifted the corporation reintroduced them.

It also seems that the crafts returned to their traditional ways. The Smiths' accounts for 1553 list a payment of 4d. to a priest ' for sayeng masse on seynt Leoy's day'[151]. St. Loye was, of course, their patron saint, and the craft held their annual dinner on his day, the 1 December. Presumably, other crafts followed suit, if they had not already done so. Within another three years the Smith's were rebuilding the altar in their chapel in St. Michael's, as were the Drapers, Mercers and Cappers. St. Anne's altar in the Girdlers' chapel in

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150. LB, 812.

151. Reader, c7, f83.

St. Michael's was apparently not rebuilt, nor was her altar in Holy Trinity, which belonged to the Dyers[152]. It does not seem that all the crafts did return to their pre-Edwardian condition, therefore, for whatever reason.

From this scattered evidence it is difficult to draw any conclusion. The impression, however, is that the restoration of Coventry's traditional religious ceremonies, observances and customs was gaining momentum as Mary's reign progressed. This progress in the first two to three years of her reign was seemingly slow, and it was not (once again) until after 1555 that the restoration really got underway. Most progress was made in the last two or three years of Mary's reign, therefore, a very short period. What the restoration most needed was time.

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152. See above, I20.

CHAPTER IV

The Spoliation

Between 1536 and 1553 the Crown destroyed institutions which embodied the Catholic Church's doctrine of salvation. In 1536 the 'lesser' monasteries were dissolved, although many escaped immediate dissolution at this time, followed by the 'greater' houses between late 1537 and early 1540, as well as those smaller monasteries which had avoided dissolution in 1536 and the friaries which had earlier been ignored. They were suppressed in the autumn of 1538. Then there was something of a lull in the proceedings. The Henrician Chantries Act began the official dismantling of the major intercessory institutions (guilds, chantries and other endowments for masses and prayers, hospitals, free chapels, colleges etc.), but Henry VIII died soon after the Act had begun to take effect. These institutions were finally dissolved shortly afterwards by the Edwardian Chantries Act of 1547. Finally the Crown turned to the purging of the parish churches of their Catholic furnishings as the new Protestant religion took the place of the old Catholicism. Protestantism could not advance and be legitimised without the spoliation of the old order.

The first of these institutions to be dissolved in Coventry were the two friaries in the autumn of 1538. Both were in an extremely poor condition by this time. The survey of the Greyfriars church (to ascertain how much lead there was on its roof) included a description of the rest of the house. It stated that 'all the hole howse besydes ys in moche ruyne all covered thorowly with tile and nott worthe the stonding for any habitation', while 'the tymbre of the howsyng is sterk nowgt'. It continued, 'The hall is down butt many of the lodginges do stond and there ys a propre parke adjoynyng unto the same'. It

should be pointed out that the friaries were not alone in this condition. The survey suggested that the materials, especially the tiles, of the House's buildings might be used to repair the adjacent king's manor of Cheylesmore.[1]

The dilapidated state of the Greyfriars, and no doubt the Whitefriars as well, requires some explanation in the light of the large sums of money spent on repairs and new buildings in the not too distant past. It seems to lie in the straitened economic circumstances of the inhabitants since the late 1520s and early 1530s. The two friaries were largely dependent upon the gifts of the citizens for their support. In the case of the Greyfriars, the house was wholly dependent upon them. When the commissioners for Valor examined the warden of the house, he stated that they had no lands and tenements, nor any other possessions or revenues of any kind, spiritual or temporal, but relied upon the uncertain charitable gifts of the people and certain 'limitations' in the country.[2] The Whitefriars was little better off. The commissioners estimated the value of the few houses and gardens that the house owned to be £3 6s.8d. a year, while the offerings made to the image of the Virgin in the Tower Chapel, which they received, amounted to £5 18s. The clear yearly income of this house in 1535 was estimated to be £7 13s.8d.[3] In the last decade of the friaries' existence gifts and bequests seem to have dried up. There was a devastating decline in gifts made during the lives of individuals, and whereas the wills of the earlier period indicate that some testators had given many pounds

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1. A.R. Martin, Franciscan Architecture in England, (Manchester UP, 1937), 71.
2. Valor. 57.
3. loc.cit.

to them during their lives, there is no evidence of such donations in the later period.[4]

The friars were therefore forced to sell their possessions or lease their property, that is, what little they had. On 16 July 1536, the Whitefriars leased a number of their domestic buildings, and part of the precincts of their house, to John Bird, the provincial of the Carmelite order, for the time of his natural life at a yearly rent of 5s. The friars could hardly have lived off such a small consideration, and it was the entry fine which would have brought in the more substantial sum. For a house to begin letting its domestic buildings and site indicates that it had fallen on very hard times. The Greyfriars avoided doing this for only another year. On 10 August 1537 they leased to Thomas Gregory of Stivichall a considerable number of their domestic buildings, together with certain lands and a garden within the precincts of the house for thirty years at a yearly rent of 6s.8d. Two days later they leased yet more of their domestic buildings, their orchard, with all the fruit trees there and the pond - together with a stable - to Thomas Downes of Coventry for fifty years at a rent of 6s.8d. a year.[5] Since all these leases were made in the period between the passing of the first Act of Dissolution and their suppression, it might seem that they had been forced into this because the citizens had withdrawn their support as a result of that Act. But this is not the case. The Whitefriars' lease is dated only two months after it was passed. It is unlikely that the fortunes of the house would have plummeted in so short a time. The leases the

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4. For examples of these wills, see above, 46-48.

5. SC/6/30 - 31, Hen. VIII/7311; A.R. Martin, ibid., 72.

houses were making came at the end of a long period of decline.

The circumstances of the two friaries shortly before their suppression were bad enough, and steps taken by the government made them even worse. In order to make leases and sell their possessions the friaries needed their common seals, without which any such transactions were invalid. In early 1538, Richard Ingworth, as visitor to the four orders of friars, made a sweep through the Midlands to the West Country sequestering these seals, and so denied the friars their last means of subsistence, as, indeed, this confiscation was intended to do. Ingworth wrote to Cromwell on 23 May 1538 from Gloucester, having passed from Northampton by way of Coventry, saying that he had found poverty everywhere, and 'shifts' made by sales and leases, which he had stopped by taking their common seals. He remarked that he thought that few houses would be able to live out the year as a result, and would be glad to surrender to the king.[6]

Rumours were circulating about the city in mid-September that the two friaries were going to be suppressed, and on the basis of such 'publick & comen reaporte & saynge' the mayor and aldermen wrote to Cromwell on 20 September. The purpose of their letter was to try to save the friars' churches from destruction. Throughout the period of spoliation in the last years of Henry Vlll's and the whole of Edward Vl's reign, the city's primary concern was to save churches threatened with destruction. Since Coventry possessed only two parish churches and relied heavily upon the churches belonging to the religious houses and guilds, this is understandable. However, this was not the reason actually given for wanting them. The mayor and aldermen explained

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6. LP, XIII, 1, 1052.

that when there was plague in the city the victims went to them for divine service instead of to the parish churches, of which there were only two in the city and where they would infect the rest of the people. The mayor and aldermen begged Cromwell to intercede with the King on their behalf to spare the churches belonging to the friars.[7] Why the mayor and aldermen should give this as their reason for wanting the friary churches to be saved is not known. That they were needed because of a shortage of parish churches in the city would have been a more forceful argument for sparing them than that they were used in time of plague, which, though not infrequent, was sporadic.

About a month later (in mid-October) the king's visitor, Dr. John London, arrived in Coventry to take the surrender of the two friaries. He had no instructions from Cromwell regarding the two friary churches, but no sooner had he taken their surrenders then he began to deface them. Now, London's commission did not empower him to suppress any friaries. He visited the friaries ostensibly as a reformer, but usually persuaded them to surrender to the king by signing a deed of surrender. The deeds of surrender signed by the two Coventry houses are dated 1 and 5 October for the Whitefriars and Greyfriars respectively, and are identical with others signed by houses elsewhere.[8] In the case of the Coventry houses, they were apparently prepared and dated beforehand, for London did not arrive in the city until sometime after 15 October.[9] He was definitely in the city by 20 October, and

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7. SP/1/650 I, f 238.

8. LP, XIII, ii, 503, 539.

9. On this day London wrote to Cromwell from Stamford, telling him he was on his way to Coventry and then to Northampton where his commission ended. Ibid., 613.

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had been there a few days, it seems, having already defaced the Greyfriars and started to do the same to the Whitefriars. His destruction had been reported to the King and Cromwell, and on 29 October, having received a letter from Cromwell censuring him, he wrote to Cromwell to defend his actions. He was by this time at Northampton, having left Coventry a few days before, and his letter is illuminating in its explanation of why he defaced many of the friaries, including the two houses in Coventry. The reason was that the people were stripping the friaries of anything that might have been of value as soon as the house surrendered, and London pleaded that if he had not defaced them himself the king would have had nothing. Regarding Coventry, he said, 'I dydd partly rase the howse of the grey ffryers because the powr people lay so sore upon ytt butt the Whyte ffryers I dydd litell unto'.[10]

Such action by the poor people should not be taken to indicate that the friars had fallen from favour. London was quite positive in his identification of those who did the spoiling as the poorer citizens of Coventry. Considering the extent of poverty in the city it is little wonder that they should have jumped at the opportunity to get for themselves a few pence or a few shillings for whatever they managed to purloin from the friaries. We are dealing with the reaction of a minority in the city, therefore. The actions of the poor must have come as a blow to the corporation, however, since they caused the loss of a badly needed church in the city, and would have removed a second had not London been prevailed upon to stay his hand from defacing the Whitefriars further until the mayor and aldermen had written to Cromwell again, which they did on 20 October. Meanwhile the churches were placed in the custody of the sheriffs to

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10. SP/1/138, f 45.

prevent further despoiling.

The mayor and aldermen told Cromwell that London had defaced the Greyfriars and started to do the same to the Whitefriars, but that they had persuaded him, 'with no little difficulty and only by long intercession', to desist from defacing the Whitefriars further, 'untill suche tyme as we myght sende unto your good lordeshipp for your help & socoure in the same'. Their letter went on to repeat the same arguments of the first, only this time their plea was for the Whitefriars church only, since the Greyfriars had been spoiled. An additional request was also made, however, for the 'houses gardyns & Appurtenances' belonging to the Whitefriars, and appended to the letter was a rental of the property. There was no offer or request to purchase the property. The mayor and aldermen seem to have been seeking a gift. They stressed that if they could not have the property they needed the church, 'orells it wilbe an utter daunger & decay shortlie to this Citie'. As before, no answer was received from Cromwell.[11]

The mayor and aldermen's request for the Whitefriars property raises an interesting point. Since they wanted the friary churches so badly, why did they not offer to purchase them from the Crown? The Crown would have sold them to the city if it had been asked, but the likelihood of it giving them to the city as a gift was remote. The answer seems to be simply that the city could not afford to purchase the two churches. There is evidence that the city was in financial straits at this time, which would have made it impossible for any large sum of money to be raised. If the city could have afforded to buy the two churches, the mayor and aldermen would almost certainly have asked to do so in their first letter. The city's

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11. SP/1/650 I, f 238.

inability to pay perhaps lost it these two churches and subsequently the cathedral.

Despite the reluctance of London to leave the Whitefriars church undefaced, the mayor and aldermen managed to enlist his support in their efforts to obtain the church. Two days after the mayor and aldermen wrote to Cromwell London sent him a progress report, in which he suggested that it would be 'a mervelose holsomthing' for the city to have the Whitefriars church and churchyard 'to bury all ther corssys ther bycouse it stondes owt of the hart of the citie'. London apparently said this because of what he had been told concerning the funeral customs of Coventry which he considered to be 'an yvill and dangerouse custome ..... groundyd oonly upon error and unsaciable covetosnes of the monks'. He related that there were but two parish churches in Coventry which stood with the cathedral in one churchyard in the centre of the city, and that when anyone died of plague, 'the curatts of bothe churches bargynythe at the farmost corsse and bringeth hym to the next and so on in ordre till they have all they myt they bring them to the great dore of the priorie in the cymytery beforsayd and ther leave them till dirige or masse be don in the parissh church'. Then, 'if any of them be rich he payeth a noble or x^{li} for an assoyl-ment If he be powr he payeth xii^{d}'. This 'Seremonye' was such 'that no so harde any man to be buryed butt fyrst he must be sett in that porch and if ther be xx^{te} ther must thay stond altho all dyed in the plage till the monk with hys Stole geve hym (as they call ytt) assoylment and then ys he safe'.[12] This is a remarkable story, if true, but whether London was giving an entirely accurate account of it we cannot know. But it seems to have convinced him that the

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12. SP/1/132, f 259.

Whitefriars church should stand. He therefore recommended to Cromwell that the city should have the church, but received no response. Although structurally intact, the church's fate was still undecided when he left.

The city had gained a breathing-space as far as the Whitefriars church was concerned, but before long it was faced with another threat upon learning that the priory was to be suppressed. As with the suppression of the friaries, the mayor and aldermen learned of this through hearsay and rumour about the city early in the new year. On 8 January they wrote to Rowland Lee, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, informing him that his cathedral church was soon to be suppressed, and that its loss would be 'not onelie a great defacyng of the said Citie but also a greatter hurt & inconvenience to all thinhabitants ther in tyme of plage', because the two friary churches had already been suppressed. They advanced the same arguments to Lee for saving it as they had to Cromwell two months before on behalf of the friaries, and begged him to direct letters to the king's Council to intercede with the king for its continuance.[13] That the mayor and aldermen sought to reach the king via Lee and the Privy Council and not through Cromwell is perhaps of some significance. They may have felt that Cromwell was not representing their case to the king, since they had not received any answer to their letters from him, and so sought to reach the king in another way.

Lee did not write to the Privy Council, however, but to Cromwell, for reasons which he made clear in his letter of 12 January. It seems that at an earlier date Cromwell had given Lee some form of assurance that his cathedral church at Coventry would not be suppressed when the bishop had expressed concern to him about what was going to happen to it.

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13. SP/1/142, f 25.

He called to Cromwell's remembrance his suit to him regarding its continuance after alteration to a secular college, 'for so miche it is my principall see and hede churche', and reminded Cromwell of their conversation together when 'your lordschype dyd gyf me lovyng answere of comfurthe'. The nature of Cromwell's assurance to Lee is not known. It was probably not explicit, else Lee would have referred to it in other terms than he did. Once again he begged Cromwell to help him and the city by allowing the cathedral church to stand (after alteration), in order that he might keep his name 'and the cite have commodite and ease to theyre desyre'.[14] Had Cromwell been willing to do anything it is unlikely that he would have had time, for a week later the priory surrendered.

Coventry cathedral was not, therefore, altered to a secular college, but the question arises as to whether there had ever been any intention on the king's or Cromwell's part to do this. In terms of diocesan administration, Coventry cathedral was largely superfluous. The diocese of Coventry and Lichfield was one of two twin dioceses in England, Coventry was the monastic half and Lichfield the secular. The other was that of Bath and Wells. Bath was the monastic half and Wells the secular half. Like Coventry, Bath's monastery was suppressed, while Wells, like Lichfield, continued. It may be possible to establish what was going on in Coventry by looking at what happened in Bath. This cathedral priory surrendered on 27 January 1539, and shortly afterwards it was offered to the inhabitants of Bath for five hundred marks. When they refused to pay this price the house and church were defaced. Parts of the priory were sold off to private individuals, who demolished

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14. T. Wright (ed.), Letters relating to the Suppression of Monasteries (Camden Society, old series, 26, 1843), 238-39.

them for their materials, but the church escaped this fate, although it stood in ruins for a number of years.[15] The suppression of Bath's cathedral was intended all along, therefore, and so it must be assumed was Coventry's. Certainly, both had been defaced, and in Coventry's case at least partially demolished, by the time the king's scheme for new bishoprics had listed those houses which were to be altered. With the destruction of monasticism both Coventry and Bath lost their cathedrals. Lichfield and Wells were considered capable of serving their dioceses on their own.

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Before discussing the surrender of the priory we will look at the circumstances surrounding the election of the last prior of Coventry, Thomas Camswell, who held his position for less than a year. The Crown sometimes liked to install its own nominee when the opportunity presented itself, and given that the Crown was in the midst of suppressing the monasteries the opportunity to place a nominee in this great Midland house was unlikely to be passed up. Camswell's predecessor, Thomas Wyford, died on 31 October 1537. On the following day the subprior, president and chapter petitioned the King for licence to choose a new prior. On previous occasions the royal congé d'élire had been granted immediately, but this time there was a delay. On 17 November Rowland Lee wrote to Cromwell in an attempt to expedite matters. The subprior and convent had written to him desiring him to write to Cromwell on their behalf. In fact, the matter had been put in hand shortly before. It seems that the king wanted a royal nominee installed as prior of Coventry and had entrusted the task of finding a suitable candidate to Cromwell. Cromwell turned to Hugh Latimer, bishop of Worcester, who knew of two likely monks of Westminster,

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15. VCH. Somerset, III, 78.

but could not remember their names. On 8 November he wrote to Cromwell telling him that the two monks were called Richard Gorton and John Clerke, who were 'both bachelors of divinitie, well lernyd, of ryght jugement, and very honeste men'. He also told Cromwell that the abbot of Westminster could ill spare them, but would no doubt do so if he perceived Cromwell's desire in the matter. There are two further letters from Latimer to Cromwell. In the first, which is undated, Latimer apologises again for forgetting to remember Gorton and Clerk. In the second, which was written on Christmas Day, Latimer simply commits the 'Coventry matter' to Cromwell.[16] By this time, however, the matter had been settled, for on 22 December a congé d'élire had been issued to the subprior and convent of Coventry.[17]

Neither Gorton nor Clerk were chosen as the next prior of Coventry. Cromwell had accepted a candidate put forward by the courtier Sir Francis Bryan in an exchange of favours. On 8 January 1538 Bryan wrote to Cromwell, 'the berer is the same persone that at my desyer it hath plesyd you to professe prioyr of Coventre ..... & [when] he [is] made prioyr therof I shall forthwith Accomplysshe my promyse made with you for the same'.[18] Why Bryan should have put forward a candidate of his own is not known. His regional interests concentrated in the counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire.[19] His interest in a Midland monastery is therefore a complete mystery. It will be remembered that he had sponsored Humphrey Reynolds in his

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16. Wright, op.cit., 147 - 48; LP, XII, ii, 1044, 1259.
17. LP, XII, ii, 1311.
18. LP, XIII, i, 30.
19. S. T. Bindoff (ed.), The House of Commons 1509-1558, (1982).

successful attempt to become a yeoman of the Crown in 1532, for motives that were then just as mysterious.[20]

There is also extant a second letter from Bryan to Cromwell, dated 18 January. Bryan had spoken with a monk of Coventry who was in London, and he told Cromwell that he had been informed that the priory was in 'grete debte and litle there Remaynynge bothe of plate ymplementes Catall and ornaments'. His concern was, that his candidate would inherit a house which was close to bankruptcy. He therefore urged Cromwell to speak with the monk himself so that he could take steps to put the house in order, and suggested he might 'tax & cesse a convenient portion of the Revenue use of the same house towards the honeste supportation of your said orator', his nominee, until the king had received his first fruits and tenths and other debts of the house had been paid, which would be 'to thoreste of yor seid orator, and my right hartee desier in that behalf'.[21]

The new prior was not strictly a royal nominee, therefore, since he owed his election to Bryan, who had secured his appointment by an exchange of personal favours with Cromwell. Bryan does not mention his name in either of his letters, but he was Thomas Camswell, a bachelor of theology and a monk of St. Albans, Hertfordshire. The formalities of his election were observed, even if the subprior and convent of Coventry had little choice in the matter. They accepted him as prior on 28 January 1538, although royal confirmation was not given until over a month later on 2 March. Temporalities were restored on the following 21 March.[22]

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20. See above, 56.

21. SP/1/241, f 287.

22. A. B. Emden (ed.), A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford A.D. 1501-1540, (Oxford, 1974); LP, XIII, i, 646 (5), (54).

Dr. London was given the commission to take the surrender of the priory and Charterhouse in Coventry. The former surrendered to him on 15 January 1539, without any trouble. London declared Camswell to be 'a sadd honest prieste as hys neybours do reportt hym', and that, 'He geve hys howse unto the Kings grace willingly and so in lyke maner dyd all hys brethern'. In the light of this, and because the house was worth one thousand pounds a year, he awarded Camswell the generous pension of 200 marks. London was quite specific in his reasons for awarding such a large pension to Camswell, who had been prior for only ten months, and they had nothing to do with 'paying' him for surrendering the house without trouble, as has been suggested. London asked Cromwell to confirm this pension, and those awarded to the monks, because 'others percyving that thees men be liberally handelyd will with better will nott oonly surrender ther howsys butt also leve the same in the better stat to the Kings use'. Camswell's pension was allegedly not a payment for services rendered, therefore.[23]

London found the priory in much debt, and Camswell had given him 'an apparent reasonable account' of the house's finances. He attached no blame to the prior for the condition of the house, however, because

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23. Those who think that Camswell was elected to play the king's game include J. C. Cox in VCH Warw., II, 57-8, and Joan Lancaster in 'Coventry', 9, in M.D. Lobel and W.H. Johns (eds.), The Atlas of Historic Towns, ii, Bristol; Cambridge; Coventry; Norwich; (1975). Those who think that the pension was an inducement to surrender without any trouble include, W.G. Fretton, 'The Benedictine Monastery and Cathedral of Coventry, TBAS, 1876, 32, and F.A. Gasquet, Henry VIII and the English Monasteries, (1899), 442. Only Gasquet uses London's letter in which he gave his reasons for awarding Camswell such a large pension. See E/314/77.

he had been elected less than a year previously and 'cowde do no grait thinge to bring the howse in better stat'. The main reason for the poor state of the house's finances was anyway the levy of first fruits as London informed Cromwell. As a result he found little treasure in the house, but he had reserved fourteen 'copes of tishew and ii of olde worke' for the king. The house was left unspoiled by London, however. He removed all the relics preserved by the monks, which were conveyed to London, but the fabric of the house he left untouched.[24]

In some memoranda to his assistant Thomas Thacker shortly before he set out on his commission London had asked him to clarify with Cromwell certain points about Coventry, including what pensions he was to assign the monks, 'and because it is the see church, whether his Lordship will have it suppressed or altered into seculars'. London seems to have assumed that there was some likelihood of the cathedral, like other ex-Benedictine Cathedrals, being turned into secular ones, which was perhaps not an unreasonable assumption. He received no answer from Cromwell to his enquiries, however. Once in Coventry it seems that London was left in no doubt as to the wishes of the inhabitants of Coventry and bishop Lee. In an undated letter to Cromwell London states, 'The bisshope of chestre [another title for the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield] and the contre be desirous to have it a College & lerned men for preaching'. He even went so far as to lend his support to the idea, suggesting that upon alteration the king might 'cause thabbots there abouts that be pensionate, as Kilingworthe and other to spende ther pensions there, and not to lye lurking in corners', and had the audacity to ask that, if the cathedral was indeed altered,

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24. G.H. Cook (ed.), Letters to Cromwell and others on the Suppression of the Monasteries. (1965), 225 - 227; E/314/77; SP/1/142, f 198.

one of the preachers might be a certain 'Dr. Baskerfield', who was seemingly known to him. Once again, no reply was received from Cromwell and London left Coventry with nothing resolved.[25]

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Before discussing the surrender of the Charterhouse, we will look at events surrounding the house immediately preceding its demise, which provide insights into the attitude of the monks to the changes of the Reformation. Their immediate response to the Act of Succession of 1534 was to write to Edward Lee, archbishop of York, who was regarded as the head of an anti-reformation party, for advice. This is revealed in a letter written by Lee to Henry VIII on 14 January 1536 defending himself after an examination by the king's visitor Richard Layton, concerning certain words he was alleged to have spoken to the general confessor of Syon and concerning the royal supremacy. He stated that four Charterhouses: Richmond, Coventry, Hull and Mountgrace had written to him for counsel on how they should respond to the Act, and that he had advised them to take the oath as he himself and great and learned men had done. Perhaps the monks of Coventry had contemplated refusing to take the oath of succession, and thereby reject the Royal Supremacy like others of their order. The monks seem to have taken Lee's advice, however, for there is nothing to suggest that they resisted the oath.[26]

The Charterhouse was threatened with dissolution in 1536, because it was worth less than £200 a year. The commissioners who re-surveyed the smaller monasteries in Warwickshire after the first Act of Suppression reported most favourably on the monks, who all wished to be sent to other houses of their order if their house was dissolved, in accordance with

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25. LP, XIII, ii, 1153.

26. LP, X, 99.

the provisions of the act. It seems that the prior had made overtures to the prior of Hinton Charterhouse, Somerset, about the possibility of some of the monks going to his house if Coventry Charterhouse was dissolved when the latter visited him at this time, and had obtained a favourable response. The prior of Hinton promised to take at least two or three of the monks if the house was dissolved and the king gave his permission for him to do so. The offer of the prior of Hinton was never taken up, however, for Coventry Charterhouse was permitted to stand. The house obtained a licence of exemption from suppression on 6 July 1537 in return for an annual payment of £20. The house's reprieve lasted a little over eighteen months.[27]

In late 1536 the Charterhouse became involved in the events of the aftermath of the Pilgrimage of Grace. Thomas Kendal, vicar of Louth, one of the original leaders of the pilgrimage, fled, via Wigston's hospital in Leicester, to Coventry to the Charterhouse, where he sought to be received into the house and the Carthusian order. He was eventually arrested at the house on Christmas Eve.[28] The monks of the Charterhouse were called upon to explain their position in the matter, and replied to Cromwell on 4 January 1536 that they did not know his true identity.[29] He had come to them saying he was from Oxford and was beneficed within three miles of Colchester and wished to be received into their religion.[30] The monks had communicated with

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27. SP/1/142, f 198; LP, XII, ii, 411.

28. LP, XI, 970.

29. ibid., XII, i, 19.

30. There was some truth in what Kendal told the monks. He had been vicar of Earls Colne, a few miles to the west of Colchester between 1533 and 1535. See Emden, op. cit.

the prior, who was in London at the time (perhaps seeking the licence of exemption from suppression for the house), and were instructed to refuse his request. Kendal remained in Coventry, however, 'using physic' within the city and the country, sometimes lodging at the Charterhouse. He also sent writings with a messenger of the monks, but without their knowledge, to certain men in Louth. It was through these letters that Kendal was traced and arrested. He told a similar story under interrogation, which seems to have satisfied Cromwell that the monks of the Charterhouse were not accomplices and nothing more was heard of the matter.

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The Charterhouse surrendered to Dr. London the day after the priory on 16 January 1539 without any trouble. London wrote to Cromwell on 18 January informing him that, 'Outwards they have no Comodyties', and the bearer of the letter 'can tell your lordeship partte what convorcanc[e] I have hadde with the guld father of the charterhouse and can tell yow of ther howse and reli[g]ose behavyor'. He did not go into detail on these points, but we can learn of the state of the house from the returns of the commissioners who re-surveyed the smaller monasteries in 1536. They found the house 'in verie good repaire and so well mayntened and kept'. Its debts were relatively few. It owed altogether £90 5s.5d., but, of that, £60 was due to the king for first fruits not yet paid. The remaining £30 was owed to 'divers particular persons'. As is perhaps to be expected, their discipline was good. The commissioners reported that there were twelve monks, 'all priests in vertue, contemplacon and religion execellent'.[31]

London had in fact been duped by the monks of the Charterhouse.

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31. SP/1/142, f 86; E36/154/60.

On 22 January he wrote to Cromwell again to inform him that he had been delayed in Coventry 'by greate Snowes and contyniall stormye wether in these parties', and 'by the greate dyssymulatyng of the gudd father of the Charterhowse wich hadd spoyledd his howse before my cumynge in suche fasshyon as I have not harde of lyke'. In several letters London informed Cromwell of what had happened. The prior 'had conveyed into divers mens hands, and part hyd in the erthe, of the substance of the house', which London only discovered with the help of a certain 'mr morloo of Coventre'. To begin with, London had found 'scarce the value of £20 nobles' worth of goods to despatch the whole house', and but 'three chalices scarcely weighing all three 40 ounces'. The prior's 'duble and crafftye delynge' having been exposed, he could now report that the king would have about 200 ozs. of plate, that he had discharged the house's debts but for ten pounds which remained outstanding and had paid all the servants'outstanding wages.[32]

London did not bear the prior or his brethren any malice for hiding their possessions, however, and was most generous to them when he discharged them from the house. To every brother he gave 40s. 'towards their apparel' and their 'cell', that is everything in it, 'saving the house and a vestment'. To the prior he also gave a 'salt of silver with a cover, a drinking cup of silver with a cover, a mazer, a chalice, a suit of vestments, with bedding and other stuff, like an honest man'. All this was on top of their pensions. These he granted for the following reasons; 'in consideration he and hys brethren voluntarilye grantyd unto the same notwithstondyng they lately obteyned the Kings graces chirter for the contynuance of the same to ther and ther frynds great Chardge and hath defydd the sayd chartre'.[33]

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32. SP/1/142, f 137, 198; Cook, op.cit., 226

33. Cook, loc.cit.

One of the monks, Richard Wall, was not awarded a pension, however. He had written some letters which 'soundeth dangerously towards hym', as London informed Cromwell after having examined him about them. London had been given the letters before arriving in Coventry with instructions to investigate them. They were addressed to the prior of Hinton Charterhouse, prompted, perhaps, by the visit of the prior of this house a couple of years before, and what is known about their content comes from an abridgement of a letter which London wrote to Cromwell after he had examined Wall. Their content is therefore somewhat obscure. The other monks were examined by London who found them ignorant of their existence. The prior and proctor certainly did not know about them. They were addressed as if from the prior and convent, but were in fact written and devised by Wall on his own, who did not read them out to the latter, but sent them 'after his own devise'. In his examination London required Wall to explain what he had meant when he used the words 'expell' and 'persecution', to which Wall made 'faynt excuses', and submitted himself to the king's mercy. Nothing more is recorded of the case. Wall was committed to ward in the city because of what he had written, and any pension he might receive was left to Cromwell's discretion.[34]

The Charterhouse had proved troublesome in the end, but like the priory was left unspoiled by London. By 25 June, however, the Crown's officers, George Gifford and Robert Burgoyne, were in the city suppressing them. Probably because they had been left untouched by London the mayor and aldermen had remained quiet after their letter to bishop Lee. Not so now. In an undated letter about this time Roger Wigston, the recorder, is found writing hastily to Cromwell

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34. SP/1/142, f 198; Wright, op.cit., 233-35.

again, begging him to direct his letters to Gifford and Burgoyne to stop them 'from Raysyng and pullinge downe' the priory and Whitefriars church until the city council had heard from the King whether they would be permitted to stand. Instead of rehearsing the same argument as before, however, he chose a new line. He said that the city's suit 'shalbe ne ys no more to have stande and Remayne But only the two Churches to make parishe Churches of, without the whiche the Citte ys half undon havyng But two parishe Churches within all the said Cittie beside not able at oon tyme to conteyne all the people ther by a great nombre', which is a departure from the previous argument.[35]

It is clear that the friary churches and the cathedral had been used as parish churches, and not just on those occasions when there was plague in the city. Why the mayor and aldermen did not give this as a reason to begin with for wanting those other churches is a mystery. Had they informed Cromwell of the true problem, some positive response might have been elicited from him, perhaps even an offer to sell the churches to the city. The absence of any such offer is all the more surprising in the light of the offer to the inhabitants of Bath regarding their cathedral. Cromwell could hardly have failed to be aware of the fact that the city wanted the churches. However, since the mayor and aldermen led him to believe that the churches were used only in times of plague, he may have gained the impression that they were not essential to the city and that the mayor and aldermen were simply after something for nothing. The request for the property of the Whitefriars probably convinced him of this.

Gifford and Burgoyne sold off all the household goods belonging to the religious houses on the spot, stripped the houses of all lead,

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35. LP, XIV, 1, 1350.

bells, glass and iron, etc., sold off the buildings for their materials and razed the churches, with the exception of the Whitefriars, which was left untouched. Practically nothing is known of who purchased the household goods, but the stone, timber, tiles, etc., of the house of Whitefriars was sold to Andrew Flammock of Kenilworth and George Pollard, while those of Greyfriars were sold to William Neele of Stivichall.[36] Who purchased the materials belonging to the priory and the Charterhouse is not known. The sites of the religious houses were subsequently used as quarries, and much of the stone purchased by the city for public works. The Chamberlains' accounts for the years immediately after the dissolutions list payments for loads of stone from the sites of the priory, Charterhouse and Greyfriars. It is not always stated what the stone was used for, but the few occasions on which it was serve to show the uses to which it was put. For example, in 1539, under the heading 'Costs of the Cawswey in Leicester Wey', and 'for pavyng at the Cooke Streit yait', the Chamberlains' accounts list payments for loads of stone from the Greyfriars. In 1542, under the heading 'Costes at Seynt Margetts chappell', the accounts show that stone was taken from the site of the Charterhouse. The same year stone was taken from the site of the priory for 'the condyt at Bablack' and 'the condyt in the Spon Streit & at the Condyt within Bablack'. This same year indentures were drawn up for the building of a new cross in Cross Cheaping between the mayor and aldermen and Thomas Philips, free mason, and John Pettit of Willingborough in Northamptonshire. The quarries to be used for the stone were named, but it was stipulated that the steps of the new cross 'shall be had and made of hard stone in the late Priory of the said City'.[37]

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36. See below, 276.

37. CRO, A 7(a), ff 172-73, 188, 193; W. Dugdale, The Antiquities of Warwickshire, (1656), 145-46.

No opposition to the suppression of the religious houses in the city manifested itself at any time while the dissolutions were carried through. Certainly to begin with the citizens could be excused for believing that the object was reform rather than general suppression. The commissioners of the Valor might have believed that their work was intended for the assessment of the first fruits and tenths granted to the Crown in 1534; and the first Act of Suppression in 1536 was couched in terms which could have led anyone to believe that monasticism itself was not under attack. Its preamble referred to the corruption prevailing in those houses with less than twelve inmates, but even seemed to allow that this might not generally be the case, for one of its clauses permitted the King to exempt any house from suppression which was found to be in good condition, and in any case, all the religious from the houses earmarked for suppression were given the opportunity to transfer to a larger house of their order if they so desired. The Act thanked God that in these 'great solemn houses' religion was 'right well & truly kept'. The temper of the Act was reformist, therefore, and there were precedents set by Wolsey's suppressions in the 1520s, which had been based on similar principles, especially in the case of the numbers of religious in a house. Humphrey Reynolds, it will be remembered, saw these earlier dissolutions carried out by Wolsey in a reforming light. He considered that it was their 'ill living and conversation' which had led to their 'pulling down', and here was exactly the same argument being advanced this time.[38] For all their devotion to the religious houses, the citizens would undoubtedly have appreciated that some needed to be reformed, even that some had to go altogether. Presented with what appeared to be

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38. See above, 58.

a move towards reform they would have lent support to it.

If the inhabitants of Coventry might be excused to begin with it becomes more difficult to give them the benefit of the doubt as the process of suppression progressed. At some point even the most naive observer could not have failed to see what was going on. Of course, there were those who saw that the suppression of the religious houses provided opportunities for personal advancement. Thus London found some citizens only too willing to help him in his work. One of these was Henry Over, who had been a member of the city council since 1535 and sheriff until shortly before London arrived in the city. In a letter of recommendation to Cromwell on 27 January 1539, London stated that he had been helped most by Over when taking the surrender of the religious houses in Coventry. He had entrusted him with the custody and conveyance to London of all plate and ornaments from the religious houses in the city, and, it seems, from the houses about the city, while he had placed in his custody the city's suppressed houses 'to staye the unrulye poore people from the spoyle of the same', in which he had taken 'very muche payne'. London went on to say that Over had been at 'more coste' to receive at all times the king's servants and commissioners when they arrived in the city than many of his neighbours, and asked Cromwell 'that he may have preferment for his monye in suche things as there be commodyus for hym before others that show not lyke Kyndness unto the kings Servants nor takithe eny payne for his graceis afferis'. He described him as 'a lyvely polytyke man', which perhaps affords a greater insight into his character than anything else. Over had evidently judged the way things were going and sought to advance himself by supporting the government line.[39]

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39. SP/1/142, f 161.

One of the most active individuals in the city was John Herford, who was sheriff at the time of the suppressions. In a letter to Cromwell of 18 January, which Herford delivered personally it seems, London told the former that Herford 'hathe be diligent to assiste me that no spoyle shuld be made of the goddes of thys monastery nor the charterhowse and gave me knowledge of many things wich I have willyd hym also to declare unto your Lordschippe'. Herford was the bearer of the letter, and the things which he had told London concerned certain religious houses and individual monks. Herford was in the king's service, being a yeoman of the Crown. In March 1538 he had informed Cromwell against the vicar of Highley, in the diocese of Hereford, who possessed a new gilded picture of the image of the Virgin to which much offering was made in times past, and which was reputed to have restored the sight of a blind woman. He told London when the latter was in the city in January 1539 that the abbot of Combe had hidden five hundred pounds in a feather bed at his brother's house, and laboured to have his house continue. These were some of the things that London directed Herford to tell Cromwell when he delivered the letter. He was himself surprised at the abbot. In his letter to Cromwell he said that it was 'harde trusting of those whose coats and hodys be sowen together', and that he had not expected the abbot would be such a 'convayor', but his attitude towards him changed when he tackled him about what Herford had said. He informed Cromwell that the abbot had confessed without any difficulty that the money was there (but not five hundred pounds, only twenty five pounds, which the abbot told him was to pay certain debts of the house at Candlemas). London found out that he was speaking the truth and that he had hidden the money because he would not trust any servant with it. Whether Herford's information concerning the amount of money was correct or was an exaggeration, the episode shows that

London was dependent upon information supplied by individuals of the locality to uncover attempts by the religious to forestall him, and he was fortunate in that someone else informed him of the spoil of the house by the prior of the Charterhouse.[40]

It is not to the likes of those individuals that we should address ourselves, however, but to those like Roger Wigston, the recorder of Coventry. He belonged to the magisterial elite of Coventry, the very classes from which most support for the religious houses came, and he was linked to some of them through ties of official service, tenancy and family.[41] If anyone was going to defend the religious houses against unwarranted attack it would surely have been people like Wigston. However, wittingly or unwittingly he assisted in their destruction. He was a member of the commission of the Valor for Warwickshire, and of the subsequent commission to re-survey the smaller monasteries after the 1536 Act of Suppression. As has already been said, he may have sincerely believed at this time that the Crown's intention was to reform the monasteries, but before long he was involved in the scramble for whatever could be had from the suppression of the religious houses.

London had apparently stayed at his house at Wolston, just outside Coventry. London told Cromwell that 'he hathe kept me moche companye', presumably as London went about his work in the city. London's letter spoke of Wigston in the best of terms, and related many details about his family and his sons and sons-in-law, who were all in the king's service. But while it included all this, his letter was really a plea to favour him in a problem that had arisen over his

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40. SP/1/142, f 86; LP, XIII, ii, 1243; Cook, op.cit., 225.

41. See above, 42-5, 54-5.

house, the parsonage of Wolston impropriated to the late Charterhouse, 'wich he haith new byldyd owt of the grownde at his owne proper costes and charge havynge promysse by the sayd howse of a leese of moo yeres to be made unto hym then he hadd'. However, the reversion of the lease had been granted to someone else shortly before the Charterhouse had surrendered. London had questioned the monks of the house about the matter and found that the prior had indeed broken his promise to Wigston and granted the reversion of the lease to another. He therefore asked Cromwell to favour Wigston in the matter, though he does not suggest the form which this favour might take.[42]

We should not be quick to condemn Wigston for co-operating with Dr. London. He was no doubt reluctant to jeopardise his own career, and perhaps those of his sons and sons-in-law, by speaking out against the dissolutions. While he did not bear the religious any animosity, and was in fact probably well-disposed towards them, he found himself called upon to play a part in their downfall because of his public office. There were doubtless many others like him who found their personal views in direct conflict with the government line, and who sacrificed the former to the latter. Moreover, why should he not get anything he could out of the suppressions like many others? If the monasteries were doomed, which they were, and even if he was in favour of their continuation, he could not be expected to have stood aside while others improved themselves and their position and he did not. This was probably an attitude taken by the majority of the inhabitants of Coventry, and apparent acquiescence in the dissolutions should not be taken as a sure indication that the Crown's policies were generally supported.

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42. SP/1/142, f 196.

The suppression of the religious houses changed people's attitudes to the Church therefore. It was no longer considered to be as inviolable as it had once been held to be. The plundering of the Church by Henry VIII led others to see no reason why they should not do the same, and between the dissolution of the religious houses and the passing of the Henrician Chantries Act a number of chantries, colleges and hospitals were surrendered, because some influential men coveted their endowments. The Hospital of St. John the Baptist in Coventry was one of ten hospitals which surrendered in these circumstances, on 4 March 1545. It was granted some five months later to John Hales of Kent, clerk of the Hanaper, who secured its surrender through some very influential friends at Court. The story behind the hospital's surrender, in particular why a stranger to the area should have wanted it, will be discussed later.[43] For now, it is enough to mention it en passant. The Henrician Chantries Act itself encouraged the very thing which it purported to want to stop. It empowered the King to take the possessions of those chantries, colleges, hospitals, etc., which had been dissolved by private individuals without his assent, usually by a descendant of the founder, but the passing of the Act prompted some to dissolve institutions which might not otherwise have been touched. Thus the grandson of Thomas Bond the elder, Thomas Bond the younger sought to dissolve his grandfather's beadhouse shortly after the Act had been passed, but was opposed by the corporation, because the city could not afford to lose its contribution to the relief of poverty in the city.[44] The corporation also entered into a dispute with John Hales over St. John's Hospital for reasons identical to those in their dispute with Bond. This case will also be

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43. See below, 278-86.

44. See below, 387-402.

discussed later.[45]

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There had been no opposition to the dissolution of the religious houses in Coventry, but there was considerable opposition to the dissolution of the guilds and chantries by the Edwardian Chantries Act in December 1547. This act swept away all chantries and other endowments for prayers and masses, all religious guilds and fraternities, and all remaining colleges. Hospitals were not touched, however. This Act affected the city more than did the dissolution of the religious houses, because it caused the dissolution of institutions which the inhabitants felt to be more truly theirs and which also had a direct bearing on their lives. The corporation's disputes with John Hales and Thomas Bond the younger are indicative of this. In consequence, therefore, the corporation was involved from the very beginning of this story, and the members of Parliament for the city led the opposition to the Chantries Act when it was introduced into the House of Commons.

The source for this story is a minute of the Privy Council for 6 May 1548, the significance of which will be dealt with in due course.[46] It reveals that the burgesses of Coventry with those of Lynn were the main opponents of the bill, and that their concern was to save their guild lands. The minute states that, when the Chantries bill was introduced into the House of Commons, 'it was also inserted that the landes perteyning to all Guyldes and Broderhoodes within this realme shuld passe unto his Majeste by waye of like gift, at which tyme diverse then being of the Lower Hous dyd not only reason and argue

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45. See below, 381-87.

46. APC, II, 1547-1550, 193-95.

against that article made for the guyldable landes, but also incensed many others to hold with them, amonges the which none were stiffer nor more busyly went about to impugne the said article then the Burgeois for the town of Lynne, in the Counte of Norfolk, and the Burgeois of the cite of Coventre, in the counte of Warwick'. The burgesses of Coventry and Lynn managed to attract support from other MPs, and convinced those members of the Privy Council in the House 'not only that the article for the guyldable landes shuld be dasshed, but also that the holl body of thact might eyther susteyn perill or hindrance, being already ingrossed, and the tyme of the Parliament Prorogation hard at hand, onles by sume goode polecy the principal speakers against the passing of that article might be stayed'. So the Privy Council decided to buy off Coventry and Lynn with the promise that, 'if they medelled no furder against it, his Majeste, ones having the guyldable landes graunted unto him by thact as it was penned unto him, shuld make them over a new graunt of the landes perteining then unto their Guyldes, &c., to be had and used to them as afore'. The bill was passed without further ado, but the guild lands belonging to Coventry and Lynn were not returned as had been promised, and they had to petition for them. This prompted the meeting of the Privy Council on 6 May 1548, from which the minute comes, when it was decided to honour the previous promises. Lynn's lands were regranted on 21 May following.[47] But those formerly belonging to Coventry were not. The city had to wait until shortly before the end of Edward's reign before they were recovered, along with a collection of chantry and obit lands. Moreover, the city had to purchase them, and thereafter pay a rent to the Crown.

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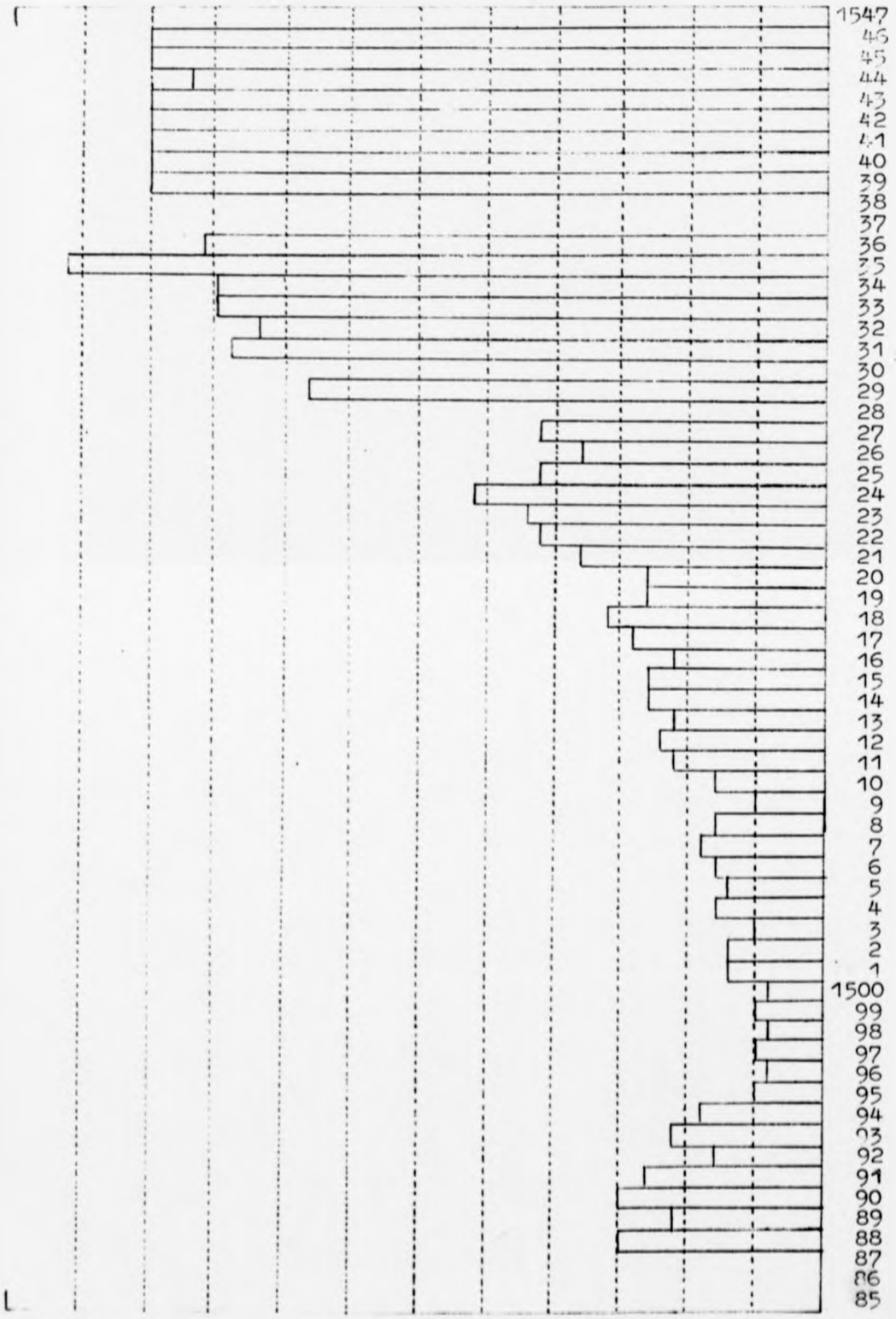
47. CPR Edward VI, II, 11 - 13.

Coventry and Lynn had different reasons for opposing the article relating to the guilds in the Chantries bill. Lynn's members stated that their guild lands were used 'for the maintenance and keping up of the peere and seabankes there, which being untended to wold be the loss of a great deale of lowe ground of the cuntre adjoining'. Coventry's burgesses said that 'where the cite was of myche fame and antiquite, sume tymes very wealthy though nowe of late yeares brought into decaye and poverte, and had not to the furniture of the holl multitude of the Commons there, being to the number of xi or xii thowsand howseling people, but two churches whein Goddes service is doone, wheroff thone, that is to saye, the churche of Corpus Christi, was specially mainteyned of the revenues of siche Guild landes lyeng only in howses and tenementes within the town as had bene given heretofore by diverse persons to that use and others no lesse beneficiall to the supportation of that cite; if therefore now by thact the same landes shuld passe from them it shuld be a manifest cause of thuttre desolacion of the cite, as long as the people when the churches were no longer supported, not Goddes service therin, and thother uses and employmentes of those landes omitted, shuld be of force constrayned tabandon and seke new dwelling places'. This is the same argument that the mayor and aldermen advanced to Cromwell some eight years previously regarding the two friars' churches and the cathedral church. Only this time they came right out immediately and said that the guild churches were also used as parish churches by the inhabitants.

The Coventry burgesses also pointed out that there would be financial implications if the city lost their guild lands. They said that when the people left the city, because there were no churches, there would be 'more loss unto the Kinges Majeste by losing so much

Table 1 Income lost by Corpus Christi Guild, 1485-1547



Source: CRO, A6

of the yearly fee ferme there, and subversion of so notable a town, then the acrewe of a sort of old howses and cottages perteyning to the Guyldes and Chauntres of the said cite shuld be of value or profit to his Majeste, as long as his Highnes shuld be at more cost with the reparacions of the same then the yearly rentes wold amount unto'. It seems that neither the king nor the Privy Council were moved by such arguments, for Coventry's guild properties were not regranted.

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There was a good deal of truth in both of the reasons given by the Coventry burgesses for opposing the article relating to guild lands in the Edwardian Chantries Act. Much has already been said about the lack of churches in the city, but nothing about the state of the guilds and chantries. We will pause, therefore, to look at the condition of these institutions by the time of their dissolution. To take the guilds first: the records of Corpus Christi Guild reveal a picture of gradual decline from the late fifteenth century until the late 1520s. The guild's fortunes took a sharp downturn about this time when it suddenly lost about one third of its income. In 1528 the rents amounted to £78 7s.4d. There is no figure the following year, but in 1530 the rents amounted to only £55 12s.8d. (See Table I). There is no apparent explanation for this. By the early 1530s, as we have seen, Corpus Christi Guild was in such a decayed condition that it was forced to amalgamate with Trinity Guild in 1535 in order to survive. Undoubtedly, the dramatic decline in the guild's income precipitated this. As for Trinity Guild's fortunes, some decline in income can be assumed, since it was not immune to the same forces that affected its junior counterpart, but unfortunately cannot be detailed because its records do not survive.

A similar picture of decline is found with regard to the chantries

Table II Chantry values, 1535, 1545 and 1547

Priory	1535 £	s	d	1545 £	s	d	1547 £	s	d
Leicester's	11	13	4						
Copston's	12	8	2	12	7	8	6	9	8
St. Michael's									
Preston's	5	9		5	12		5		4
Mereton's	5			6	9		8	3	4
Pysford's	6			26	9*		12	6	8
Shearmen & Tailors'	2	16	6½	5	1	4			
Sheppey's				4			4	6	
Haye's				1	2	4		15	8
Tate's							5	6	8
Crosse's									
Holy Trinity									
Allesley's	4	17		5	19	8	5	12	8
Percy's	10	10		14	3	8	13	19	4
Marler's	5	6	8	8	14	7	9	1	5
Cellet's	5	12		3	8	8	2	3	8
Lodyngton's				2	19		2	19	
Holy Cross									

* The Henrician chantry commissioners recorded the combined value of Pysford's chantry and Ford's almshouse.

Sources: Valor, E 301/33, 53.

(See Table II). The Edwardian Chantry Certificates noted that Pysford's chantry in St. Michael's had been endowed with lands to the value of £13 6s.8d., but owing to their decay they were now worth only £12 6s.8d., while Preston's chantry in the same church, though it had originally been for two priests, because its endowment lands had decayed so much, it was now served by only one priest, the lands being worth but £5 0s.4d. The endowment lands of Ford's almshouse had also decayed. Whereas they had originally been worth £12 13s.4d., they were now worth £12 0s.4d., a small decrease admittedly, but a decrease all the same.[48]

The endowment lands of some chantries were insufficient to support a priest at all, and, according to common practice, their revenues were given to augment the income of a neighbouring priest on the understanding that he would continue to pray for the soul of the founder. For evidence of this we must turn to the Henrician Chantries Certificates, since the Edwardian ones do not always mention the fact that certain chantries had been treated in this way. No less than four chantries had been given in augmentation of other priests' livings, but not other chantry priests'. They had been used to augment the livings of four stipendiary priests of chapels in the city that were subordinate to the parish churches. The amalgamation of the revenues was mutually beneficial, because the livings of the stipendiary priests had so declined that they were themselves becoming insufficient to support a priest on their own. The four chantries concerned, with their value in brackets before reprises, were Sheppey's (£4) and Hayes' (£1 2s.4d) in St. Michael's; and Cellets (£3 8s.7d) and Lodyngton's (£2 19s.) in Holy Trinity. They were given in augmentation of the livings, of Sowe (£6), Foleshill (£3 17s.), Stoke (£2) and Exhall

48. E/301/53, f 1.

(£3 6s.8d.) respectively.[49] The chantries were effectively removed from the parish churches of St. Michael's and Holy Trinity, therefore.

When the chantries had been given in augmentation of the livings is not known, but it can be said with some certainty that it was before the Valor of 1535. That survey notes that Cellet's chantry had already been united to the living of Stoke, listing the combined value as £6, which was 13s.4d. more than the combined value in 1545.[50] The 1535 survey also notes that the combined livings were held by one Thomas Perte, and by good fortune the letters appointing him to the combined living are extant, and are dated 6 December 1529.[51] The other three chantries are not listed in this survey, but since they are named in both the Henrician and Edwardian Chantry Certificates, they must have been in existence at this time. The fact that they were not listed suggests that they had already been given in augmentation of the livings, and that this is why they were omitted from that survey. The commissioners were unaware that they had been given for this purpose.

A few chantries had ceased to exist altogether. For example, Leicester's Chantry, which had been in the cathedral church, was noted in the Valor, but does not appear in either the Henrician or Edwardian Chantry Certificates. It seems to have been lost in the disruption surrounding the dissolution of the cathedral priory. It was one of two chantries which were in the cathedral church, the other being Copston's chantry, which was transferred to St. Michael's, and is noted by the Henrician and Edwardian commissioners. Presumably, if Leicester's chantry had survived the dissolution of the cathedral

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49. E/301/31, ff 8, 9.

50. Valor, 60, E/301/31, f 9.

51. BRL, 297839, f 11

priory and been removed to one of the parish churches, it would have been picked up by one or other of the chantry commissions. There are two, however, Crosse's chantry in St. Michael's and the chantry of the Holy Cross in Holy Trinity, which are omitted in all three surveys.[52] The Edwardian Chantry Certificates noted that merely an anniversary obit was still kept for John Crosse on the Sunday after St. Blase's Day (3 February) each year by the mayor, bailiffs and communalty. Had the lands of Crosse's chantry decayed so much as to only be able to pay for an obit? If so, why was the chantry not combined with another living as in the previously mentioned cases? Similar questions might be asked about the chantry of the Holy Cross, but, without more information, no conclusions can be drawn.

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There was no popular outcry from the inhabitants of Coventry against the dissolution of the guilds and chantries. Their demise was met with the same acquiescence which greeted the dissolution of the monasteries ten years before. However, on this occasion the citizens did not stand idly by while the Crown took all the profit. The Church was, indeed, no longer considered to be inviolable as it had once been before the dissolution of the monasteries, for there is considerable evidence that many citizens concealed the existence of obits from the Edwardian chantry commissioners in order to appropriate their endowments. Given the nature of these endowments, which comprised a mass of small properties, and the fact that they were in many cases administered by private individuals, who were for

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52. Evidence of their existence is taken from T. Sharpe, Illustrative Papers on the History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry.... (Birmingham, 1871), 37, 88; Dugdale, op. cit., I73, I78.

the most part descendants of the founders, this would not have been difficult.

The Henrician chantry Certificates listed no obits or stipendiary priests. The Edwardian ones did, but the obits were only a small proportion of those requested by testators whose wills survive. The commissioners found that the Trinity Guild kept four obits altogether, while in St. Michael's, the mayor, bailiffs and communalty were responsible for ten, the Cardmakers for two, the Mercers for two, the Drapers for three and the churchwardens for three also. Corpus Christi Guild maintained two obits, and in Holy Trinity twelve obits were maintained by the churchwardens there, two by the Butchers (but, since this craft had dismissed its priest before EdwardVI's reign, the obits were no longer kept), and the Commoners of Jesus Hall one. This was a total of forty one obits. Among the surviving wills there are altogether forty two requests for obits which would still have been observed at the time the chantry commissioners made their survey. If those kept by the guilds are taken out of both counts the resulting totals are thirty five and thirty nine. But only eleven names are common to both. This means that of the thirty nine requests for obits in the wills, twenty eight were not noted by the chantry commissioners. This in turn means either that the obits were never established by executors and overseers, or that the commissioners for one reason or another were unaware of their existence. The latter seems to be the more likely explanation.

Before discussing the other possibilities, let us look at the number of obits actually kept by Trinity Guild, not merely requested, in 1532 - 33. Fragments of the guild's records for these years list six obits that were observed at various times, including that of

Nicholas Burwey, whose will of 1519, is one of the three among the surviving wills which requested the guild's to keep an obit in perpetuity. Of the other two, William Pysford the elder also asked Trinity Guild to keep an obit in perpetuity in 1517. Counting him with the others, there should have been seven obits listed as being kept by Trinity Guild instead of only four. The other testator to request a guild obit was Robert Blewbury in 1491, who wished Corpus Christi Guild to keep his.[53]

As for the twenty-four obits listed by the chantry commissioners for individuals whose wills are not extant, there are two possible explanations. One is that the obits concerned were requested prior to 1485, (before which time few wills survive) such as that for John Crosse, whose chantry, founded in 1412 has been referred to. The other explanation is that obits were requested by the individuals named some time between 1485 and 1547, but their wills have not survived. Furthermore, since the surviving wills are only a fraction of the total number of wills made, we may wonder how many individuals whose wills are not extant made bequests for obits which were not noted by the commissioners. All this brings us to the conclusion that the chantry commissioners found only a fraction of the obits then in existence. The chantry certificates cannot, therefore, be used as a guide to the extent of devotion or adherence to the old religion when the intercessory institutions were dissolved.

There may have been any number of reasons why the chantry commissioners failed to note obits, but the likeliest is that as soon

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53. G. Templeman (ed.), The Records of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, St. Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Katherine of Coventry. (Dugdale Society, xlx, 1944). 154-60; PCC, 27 Ayloffe; 9 Ayloffe; 26 Dogett.

as some of those entrusted with keeping them realised that the Crown was turning its attention to these intercessory institutions, they ceased to maintain them. In many cases, obits were supervised by the family and friends of the deceased, either as feoffees of his or her lands, or as heirs, so they had more than a passing interest in what happened to them. Lands given outright to a particular institution for the performance of an obit were ceded to the Crown upon the dissolution of that institution. But obit lands which remained in the hands of feoffees and family could be withdrawn from such use quite easily. It is not always possible to tell from individuals' wills whether or not they gave land outright to a particular institution, or if they merely permitted them to receive the rents, but so far as can be ascertained from the wills, it seems that between 1485 and the early 1520s testators tended to give land outright. Thereafter, in almost every instance, the obit property was kept in the hands of the feoffees or heirs, who were to deliver the rents of certain lands to an institution or permit it to take rents from certain lands.[54] In such a case it would have been easy for heirs simply to stop paying for an obit as soon as they suspected the Crown's intention to confiscate the lands given for such 'superstitious purposes', without anyone really questioning their actions. Many obits must have been discontinued in this way prior to the Edwardian Chantries Act.

Other obits had also been discontinued by the overseeing institutions before the passing of the Chantries Act in 1547. The commissioners noted that the Butchers had discharged their priest, and so had the Dyers, it seems, since no obits were listed as being kept by this craft. Though the Butchers had no priest, the commissioners

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54. See above, 95-7.

noted two obits that it had kept before it had discharged its priest. These were the obits of John Tedde, grasier, whose will of 1516 is extant, and William Hardye, priest, whose will is not. Tedde gave his house 'next St. John Bridges' to his wife for the term of her natural life to see his obit kept, after which time the house was to go to the Butchers, who were to see it kept thereafter. The commissioners did not note, however, that Thomas Turnour, also a grasier, had bequeathed a stable and two tenements in Dog Lane to his wife for her life in 1518 to keep an obit for him. After her death the property was to pass to the Butchers, who were then to take on the responsibility for seeing the obit kept. None of the obits formerly kept by the Dyers was listed by the commissioners. The only one that is known about is that provided by Alice Parkyns in 1510, who bequeathed her house in Bishop Street to this craft to keep a yearly obit for her and her husband. The commissioners listed two obits that had been kept by the Tanners, although the implication of their statement, already mentioned, regarding stipendiary priests is that their priest had been discharged at some time prior to the end of Henry VIII's reign. The absence of stipendiary priests in Holy Trinity also meant that the priest for whom Richard Jackson had provided to pray for him in 1510 had also been discharged. Moreover, the commissioners stated that the church held no stocks of money, even though such a stock had been given to the church only as recently as 1543 by Richard Brecknock.[55]

The commissioners' returns for St. Michael's contain no obvious omissions. As with Holy Trinity a large number of obits were unrecorded,

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55. LJRO, Tedde, John, Registered Wills, B 1, PCC, 11 Ayloffe; LJRO, Register Blythe, B/A/1/14i, f 93; E/301/53, f 4; PCC, 31 Bennett; LJRO, Brecknock, Richard, 16/10/43.

but as far as the rest of the returns is concerned, there apparently is nothing missing. Nevertheless, the large number of obits and other forms of provision for their souls which the citizens of Coventry had made, but which the commissioners failed to uncover, is very significant. We cannot know whether it was merely oversight on the part of the commissioners that so much was missed, or because private individuals had carried out their own dissolutions and confiscations. To some extent it would have been a combination of these things. But it is unlikely that the inhabitants of Coventry would have disclosed the existence of an obit for the Crown's benefit. Besides, many would have looked upon such an endowment as their own or their family's property.

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The next stage in the Crown's spoliation of the Church was heralded by the Royal Injunctions of July 1547 which required all churches to be stripped of everything of 'idolatry and Superstition', but it was not until the following year that the purging process was fully under way. On 6 January 1548 a collection of copes, banners and streamers was sold by the churchwardens of Holy Trinity. Jasper Rogers purchased 'v copps of red teysser' for £10, Edward Damport and John West bought 'ii other copes of red tessew' for £3 6s.8d., Cuthbert Joynour paid 33s.4d. for 'a cope off red velvet', Richard Sewall obtained 'a grene velvet cope' for 30s., a certain 'bawden dossold' bought 'one cope of red velvet' for £5 and 'ii olde copes' for 10s., Thomas Kyrven acquired 'ii olde copes' for 33s.4d., John Snede and Thomas Saunders paid 33s.4d for 'ii blew copes', Thomas Owers purchased a banner cloth for 2s., John Harford bought another for 16d. and Richard Nonde a streamer for 20d. The total value of the items sold

was £26 18s.8d.[56] It is not stated why these things were sold, but the religious changes of the new reign, embodied in the recent injunctions, would have meant that these copes and banners, etc., would no longer be needed in the new liturgy, and there was a good deal of sense in selling them and putting the money raised by their sale to more profitable uses. Presumably, the churchwardens of St. Michael's were doing the same thing. The loss of the churchwardens' accounts of both parishes, apart from some fragments from Holy Trinity, means that the extent of the sales cannot be known.

The accounts of some of the crafts may be used to fill in the gap left by the churchwardens accounts, however, and for the year 1548 sales of sundry items and the materials of the craft chapels are to be found. The Cappers' accounts, for example, under the heading 'Ressette of the chappell Kepars', for this year, listed the following sales: 16d 'for iron yt belonged to ye chappell', 2s. for 'ii battelments over ye alter', 12d. 'for ye sakryng bell', 18d. 'for pese of sylver yt was at ye masse bok', and 6d. 'for a masse bok'. Other entries under the same heading for this year indicate that the 'substance' of the chapel was sold to craft members. The accounts state, for example, 'p'd at the Crane when they craft dyd see ye ve vestments, iiis. xd.', and 'pd at ye sellyng of ii standers of brasse, viiid.'. These last two entries give the impression that the contents of the chapel were sold off by auction.[57] The Drapers' accounts indicate that it was not until the following year, 1549, that its chapel had been purged of papistical things. That year payments are listed of 4d. 'payd for whyt lymyng the Awter', 6d. 'payd for carryng

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56. WRO, DR/801/12, f 13.

57. Cappers' accounts, f 71 - 2.

awei the bords of the Auter', and 8d. 'payd for carryeng awei the cofer'.[58] The religious changes under Edward VI were not completed before this year, therefore, if then.

The physical conversion of churches to Protestant use could not be achieved overnight. The stripping out of the chantries and guilds was not achieved quickly, although it was probably completed by 1549, which coincided with the first Book of Common Prayer. The same year, of course, commissioners were again abroad making inventories of the goods belonging to all parish churches, ostensibly to prevent pilfering, but really to prepare the way for the stripping of their remaining possessions. In March 1551 the Privy Council ordered that this was to begin, but for some reason there was a delay, though further preparations were made in 1552. In January 1553 it was finally decided to go ahead, and commissions were issued, but the steps taken by the Crown had forewarned everyone, and the very pilfering that the Crown had hoped to prevent had apparently taken place.

Again, our evidence is drawn mainly from the craft accounts. The Cappers' accounts for 1552, under the heading 'Ressete for chappell stuffe', record the following: 2s. 'Received of John Stone for a table of the altar', of 3s.8d. 'Received of the goodman lyttley for vii pylloes', and 3s.11d. 'Received of the same lyttley for iiii candel-stykys for tapers'.[59] The Drapers' accounts record similar payments under the heading 'Detts owyng to the occupashun' for 1554, which must refer to sales made before the commissioners made their returns. They were £4 from 'Mr. Nothermyll ffor a payre of orgaynes', £3 6s.8d. from

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58. Drapers, CRO, Access. 154 (Daffern), f 27.

59. Cappers' accounts, f 74.

'Mr. Nethermyll ffor a challys weyng xvi oz. and hauffe', and 20s.4d. from 'Mr. Ryley for a Corpustus, and albe & a vestment'.[60] There may have been more sales. The detailed inventories of Coventry do not exist, however, so we cannot know. But we do have an account of the sale of church goods in the city. The commissioners sold goods and ornaments on the spot to the value of £8 6s.9d., as well as giving 'one coppe of Blewe tysshewe rayced with Blewe velvet orphased with neke wyngs of imaherye silk & gold' to Arthur Sturton, who was apparently one of the commissioners. The account is dated 20 June 1553.[61]

This is the only evidence we have of the despoiling of Coventry's parish churches towards the end of Edward VI's reign. Of course, the process had not been completed before Mary's accession, when it was put into reverse. The evidence shows again that the citizens were not prepared to let the Crown take all the profit on the churches' remaining treasure. However, while many probably kept what they had bought some resold, or simply gave back to the churches what they had purchased at the Marian restoration, as if it had been given into their safe-keeping until this time.

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60. Drapers, Access. I54 (Daffern), f 33.

61. E 117/56.

CHAPTER V

The Disposal

The disposal of the property belonging to the dissolved religious institutions in Coventry is best seen from the point of view of the corporation. We are primarily concerned with the urban property that lay within the city walls and the suburbs, which was the centre of the corporation's sphere of authority and influence. Its fundamental concern was to ensure that it maintained its authority and influence there, which might be threatened if large amounts of property passed into the hands of others. This probably explains why the mayor and aldermen wanted to obtain the property belonging to Whitefriars and the priory at the same time as they sought the two friary churches and the cathedral church in 1538-39. The corporation's motives were seldom simple. This concern was also no doubt present some nine years later, in 1547, when the MPs for Coventry opposed the article relating to guilds in the Edwardian Chantries Act. The relation between the guilds and the corporation is difficult, if not impossible, to define, but the loss of the guild lands would have constituted a grievous blow to the city. Beyond this basic concern, however, there were more specific considerations, such as the matter of the friary churches and the cathedral church. As we have seen the corporation wanted to preserve these churches, and the two guild churches, in order to provide sufficient accommodation for all the inhabitants to attend divine service, because the existing two parish churches,

for all their size, were quite inadequate. Another particular concern of the corporation was to preserve those institutions which contributed to the social welfare of the inhabitants, such as the poor, which included St. John's hospital and the two privately founded almshouses established by Thomas Bond the elder and William Ford. The corporation may also have been concerned to see the grammar school supported by Trinity Guild continue, since it provided the only education facilities in the city, apart from the provision for poor scholars made by the cathedral priory and Charterhouse.

The fate of the Whitefriars church, the sites of the religious houses in the city and the lands belonging to them were the first concern of the corporation after the dissolutions of 1538-39, but nothing was done immediately, and it was not until the early 1540s that the corporation made a move. On 29 July 1542 the mayor, bailiffs and communalty of Coventry were granted various properties formerly belonging to the priory (mostly in the area immediately outside the city walls) together with a small amount of property in the city itself[1]. The yearly value of the lands was £77 12s. 4d., which were bought at a purchase price of twenty years for £1466 3s. 8d. The corporation could never have afforded such a large sum itself, and the money was provided by Thomas White of London, merchant tailor, later Sir Thomas White, mayor of London, with the intention of using the rents from the lands to establish

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1. LP, XVII, 556(21).

a loan fund in the Midlands for young men, who, having just completed their apprenticeships, needed capital to set up in business themselves[2]. The purchase included the house and site of the Greyfriars. The corporation, therefore, acquired a large area of land within the city which it sorely wanted, by taking advantage of White's generosity to the city.

The year after this purchase was made the corporation turned its attention to the fabric of the Greyfriars, as well as to Whitefriars church and the priory. In early 1543 the fabric of Whitefriars church, which had initially been sold to two speculators in monastic lands, Andrew Flammock and George Pollard, was purchased from them by the corporation for £40. The Corporation accounts list a payment of 33s. 4d. to John Nethermyll 'in full payment of xx^{li} with xviii^{li} vi^{s} viii^{d} which the said John Nethermyll pd to Mr flamak for the lait White freers Church'. The same accounts, referring to this sum of money again, state that £10 was 'pd to Mr flamake for the Whit freers', and £20 was 'pd to Mr Pollard for the same'[3]. Pollard's receipt for the money is extant, dated 27 February, which states that he paid £20 to Henry Over 'for the Churche vestry Churche yarde and Pryory of the Whyte ffryers... to thuse of the Cominaltye of the saide Cytie of Coventre'[4]. Shortly

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2. See below, 405-10.

3. CRO, A9, ff 15, 17.

4. CRO, W1521.

thereafter, the corporation made another identical purchase regarding the Greyfriars. On 2 April the mayor, John Saunders, and two aldermen, Cuthbert Joynour and John Jett, purchased the rights to the materials of the Greyfriars from William Neale of Stivichall, to whom they had first been sold. For £6 13s. 4d. he sold 'all tile tymber, & stone, & other stuff, of all maner of houses & edyfices of, in, & upon, the lait grey ffreers, in the said Cite of Coventre, & of, in, & upon, the Churche & Steple ther, with all his title and interesse in the same, except & reserved unto the said William Neale, the Stone & other stuff, of, in, and upon, the revestre & Chapter house ther. And also xx^{ti} loids of other Stone, ther appoynted & sold to Mr. Henrie Over, and except also, all other edyfices & buyldyngs ther, which were not sold by the Kyng's graces Survayor ther, unto the said William Neele'[5]. By this purchase the corporation gained more or less complete control over the fate of Greyfriars.

Then, in the autumn of 1543, the corporation sought Whitefriars church itself. The Corporation accounts list payments of 18s. to Thomas Gregory 'for his charge & expense to London in fetchyng the particulars of the Whit freers', 12d. 'for a horse hier for Thomas Gregorie to London', 2s. 'for horsbreg' and 2s. 'for his pehnes'. A further sum of 13s, 4d, was paid, presumably by Gregory,

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5. T. Sharpe, Illustrative Papers on the History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry . . . , (Birmingham, 1871), 203.

'for the particulars of the priorie & Whit ffreers'. Clearly, the corporation was also interested in the cathedral priory, though whether this was just the site of the monastery, its buildings, or both, is not known. The accounts also state that on 20 September 1543, 53s. 6d. was taken out of the common box and given to Cuthbert Joynour and others 'for ther costs to the Courte to Woodstocke in suying for the Whit freers Church', and that 7s. was paid 'for iii horses hier when Mr. Cuthbert & Mr. Kyvet rood to the Courte to Woodstock'[6]. There are no letters patent granting Whitefriars church to the corporation, but there can be no doubt that it did obtain it, but not, it seems, until 1545.

By the middle of the following year another party was expressing interest in Whitefriars. This was John Hales, a member of a large and important Kentish family, who was to become an important figure in Coventry through his purchases of property in and around the city as a result of the Henrician dissolutions. In June 1544 he submitted particulars on behalf of Sir Ralph Sadler for the house, etc., of Whitefriars, except the church and churchyard, and all messuages, etc., belonging to the same in the city. He was probably interested in the church and churchyard as well at this time, as subsequent events indicate, but the corporation's action in the previous September forestalled him. The particulars he submitted contain a memorandum that 'the Church the Bellfrey

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6. CRO, A9, ff18-19. For the city's purchase of the church, see below, 289.

with the Chapell and Iles of the same the Queare Vestre Churchyard with the waye & pathes to the same belong to be Reservyd to the Kings maiesties use Whereof the partyclers ar delyvered to the Mayor and Cytezyns of the Cytye of Coventre to be boughte & purchased to the use of the said Cytie'[7]. There was nothing to prevent him obtaining the house, etc., however, and no objections were raised. The corporation must have regretted Hales' purchase of the property belonging to the friary, however, in which they had expressed an interest in one of their letters to Cromwell at the time of the house's surrender. On 27 August letters patent were issued granting the abovementioned property to Sadler, who, on 16 December following, sold the same to Hales. Hales then converted the house into a dwelling, naming it 'Hales Place', and took up residence in Coventry[8].

There can be no doubt that Sadler obtained the property for Hales and not for himself, and it was not the last time that he would do this sort of thing for his friend. The two men had met while in Cromwell's service, and formed what was to be a lifelong and, for the most part, friendly association. Hales entered Cromwell's service in 1535, the same year in which Sadler was made Cromwell's assistant in the Hanaper. Hales was soon assisting Sadler in his duties at the Hanaper, when Sadler, along with

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7. E/318/19/967.

8. LP, XIX, ii, 166(70).

Sir Thomas Wriothesley, was appointed secretary to the king in 1540. By 1541 Hales was known officially as Sadler's deputy. When Sadler was away on an embassy to Scotland in 1544, business was sent as a matter of course to Hales. In 1545 Sadler surrendered his patent, and another was issued granting a joint patent of the office to himself and Hales[9]. From the late 1530s Sadler entrusted Hales with power of attorney in his personal affairs, and the latter is found acting on the former's behalf to acquire property in London and the home countries, particularly Hertfordshire, much of which was ex-monastic[10].

If Hales' relationship with Sadler explains how he obtained the house of the Whitefriars, etc., there is still the question of why he did so, since he was not a native of the city. Presumably he would not have bought the house of the Whitefriars sight unseen, if he had intended to live in it permanently. One possibility is that he was with Dr. London on his second visit to the city in January 1539. Hales was subsequently to found a school in Coventry, King Henry VIII's, and a history of its foundation claims that he 'attended' the commissioners for the dissolution of the monasteries in Coventry, when, apparently, he was 'wonderfully

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9. S. T. Bindoff (ed.), The House of Commons 1509-1558, (1982).
10. A. J. Slavin, 'Sir Ralph Sadler and Master John Hales at the Hanaper: A Sixteenth Century Struggle for Property and Profit', BIHR, 38 (1965), 35.

taken with the pleasant Situation of the House lately belonging to the White Friars'[11]. There is no other evidence to suggest that Hales was present at these dissolutions, but the suggestion is plausible. His link with the city seems to have pre-dated the dissolution of the religious houses in the city. So it is also possible that it was through his work with the Court of First Fruits and Tenths that Hales first visited Coventry sometime after 1535. In that year, in which he entered Cromwell's service, Hales was dealing with compositions for first fruits and tenths, together with Henry Polsted, another servant of the minister, and in 1537 he was appointed clerk to Sir John Gostwick, treasurer of the new department[12]. As clerk, Hales drew up bonds, charters, indentures and acquittances for the composition and payment of first fruits. He was also involved in field surveys and special inquiries, and in evaluating controversial settlements[13]. This sort of work must have required him to move about the country, and it is possible that it brought him to Coventry. On such an occasion he might have been 'wonderfully taken', not only with the Whitefriars, but also with the city as a whole. An indication of

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11. An Account of the Many and Great Loans, Benefactions, and Charities Belonging to the City of Coventry . . . ', anon. (1733), 72.
12. S. T. Bindoff, loc. cit.
13. W. C. Richardson, Tudor Chamber Administration 1485-47, (Louisiana State UP, 1952), 341.

his early association with Coventry is the award of a joint annuity of £5 to his brother Stephen and himself out of the lands belonging to the Charterhouse, which was granted on 1 December 1537. Lists of annuities, fees, pensions, corrodies, etc., granted by the religious houses of Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and Leicestershire, show that it was only this house which favoured Hales and his brother in this way[14].

Hales was a threat to the corporation's power and authority in the city after the Henrician dissolutions. Having purchased the house of the Whitefriars, he subsequently secured other, often substantial, grants of property in and around Coventry. On 13 July 1545 he obtained a grant of the site of St. John's hospital with all buildings within it, all its property in the city and its suburbs, and all its possessions in the county of the city of Coventry, Warwickshire and Leicestershire. The letters patent granting Hales the hospital and its possessions stated that the grant had been made 'for several reasons and for £400 paid to the king's own hands'[15]. The particulars submitted by Hales, this time in his own name, dated 4 June, contain the following memorandum: 'I John Hales have & do make my most humble suyte unto the Kyngs Mauestie that it will please his highness that I maye have to me & myn heres partly of his Maiesties liberalitie,

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14. SC/6/28-29 Hen VIII/1339

15. LP, XX, i, 1335 (39).

partly for my moneye the possessions lands & tenements comprised in the particulars hereunto annexed accordyng to the rates & values therin declared'[16]. The value of the hospital's possessions was £99 13s. 6d., excepting lands in Smercote and Radford, parcel of the same, which were estimated to be worth £95 13s. Therefore, Hales obtained lands worth £195 6s. 6d. a year for next to nothing, although he was bound to discharge a promise made to the king in return for them.

Another memorandum attached to the particulars for the grant explains what the promise was. It stated: 'The sayd John Hales must be bounde to ffynde one ffree Scole within the sayd Cite of Coventre'. So Hales obtained the grant in return for a promise to found a school in Coventry, and on the same day as the hospital and its possessions were granted he received a licence permitting him to found a school. It was to be called 'the Coventry School of King Henry VIII', and, 'that those who discharge the office of instructor and teachers in the said School might not want a fair and liberal stipend and thus dissatisfied with their kind of life turn aside to other modes of life where greater profit is to be had', it was to be endowed with lands to the yearly value of two hundred marks in Mortmain (£136 6s. 8d.), which were to be given to the mayor, bailiffs and communalty of Coventry for the support of the same[17]. The loss of the hospital was a

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16. E/318/23/1281.

17. LP, XX, 1, 1335 (38).

severe blow to the provision for poor relief in Coventry, but it was mitigated to some extent by the prospect of the city having another school in its place. However, Hales did not immediately establish the school, and there began a protracted wrangle between him and the corporation over its foundation and endowment, which continued throughout Hale's life and beyond, not being finally settled until well into Elizabeth's reign. This story will be told later[18].

The manner in which Hales obtained the grant of the hospital and its possessions is related in the history of the school's foundation. This states that, after Hales' return to London from Coventry where he had 'attended' the king's commissioners for the dissolution of the monasteries there, 'he desired his intimate Acquaintance, Lord Cromwell, and Sir Anthony Denny to move the King, that he might have leave to purchase some of his Majesty's lands lying in and about Coventry'. According to the author, 'The King was easily prevailed upon to hearken to any Motions of this King; but understanding there was no Free-School in the said City, he told Sir Anthony, that he should be well pleased to meet with a Purchaser who would give something towards the Foundation of a School, whereby others might be encouraged to promote so good a Work'. To this Denny is said to have answered, 'That his Majesty knew John Hales to be a very good Scholar, and a Lover of Learnyng and Learned Men; and

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18. See below, 381-7

therefore could not meet with a Purchaser more fit for that Purpose'. The king then discussed the matter with Hales personally, and consented to his request, granting him, according to the author, 'Diverse Houses, Lands, and Quit-Rents, Parcels of the late dissolved Priory and other Religious Houses in and near this City; at the same Time granting his Royal Licence, dated at Portsmouth, to found and establish a perpetual Free Grammer School in the said City'[19]. This is wrong, insofar as the property granted to Hales belonged to the hospital and not the priory, but the mistake does not detract from the fact that Hales obtained property in Coventry through influential friends at Court, and this episode indicates the extent of his influence. Thanks to his friend he had forced the hospital to surrender to the king and obtained a valuable collection of properties for next to nothing.

Hales' interest in the Hospital of St. John the Baptist may be traced back to before the dissolution of the monasteries in the city. There is an undated letter, clearly one of a number concerning the hospital, written by Sadler to Thomas Wriothesley in which he thanks him for the letter 'which ye lately procured for me to the prior of Coventre for thospitall of Saynt Johns'. He tells him that his friend 'Mr. Pary my Lords (i.e. Cromwell's) servant' delivered it to the prior, and received a verbal answer, which the prior later put down in a letter to Hales. This letter Sadler enclosed in his to Wriothesley, in order 'ye may perceyve

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19. Coventry Charities, 72-3.

the better how the case stondeth', and added, 'Idoubt not but it will com to good effecte if it be well folowed'. This letter is now lost. Sadler also enclosed a copy of another letter written by Hales, which was devise d to be wrytten from my Lorde to the saide prior', which he asks Wriothesley 'to cause one of yor clerks to wryte it up clere if it be well orells to refourme it as ye shallthinke mete' and to sign it himself so that it might be sent the following day. The nature of the complicated business being conducted is not known. At this time Hales could hardly have envisaged the hospital's suppression. Without more information it is impossible to know what Hales was trying to do. But Sadler's letter was yet another favour to his friend Hales. In it he tells Wriothesley 'I promyse you obteyning of it (the letter) shoulde be more pleasunt and acceptable unto me then if my Lorde gave me a thing worth £100,000 not for any benefite or advantage that I shall receyve thereby to the value of a peny I promyse you uppon my poure honestie, But for the gratification of my friende'[20].

On 28 July 1545, only five days after the hospital had been granted to Hales, the site and precincts of the cathedral priory, a number of mills belonging to the same, together with the bulk of the properties in the city formerly owned by the house as well as all the property lately belonging to the abbey at Kenilworth in Coventry, was granted to John Combes and Richard Stansfield.

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20. LP, XIII, ii, 250.

The properties, that is, the tenements, cottages, gardens and water mills, were worth £137 19s. 10d. a year, and were sold at seven year's purchase. The site of the priory was valued at 21s. 4d a year, and was sold at twenty years purchase[21]. The particulars for the grant, however, dated 1 December 1544, reveal that Combes and Stansfield were acting on behalf of Hales and his brother-in-law Richard Morison, who were the real purchasers of the property. They state that, 'Richard Moryson esquyer and John Hales in the name and behalf of John Combes & Richard Stanfelde do requyre to purchase of the Kings Maiestie by virtue of his graces Comyssion of sale the premysses conteyned in the particulars hereunto annexed'[22]. Combes and Stansfield subsequently made over the property to Hales and Morison, and the latter was eventually to cede his interest also, thus giving Hales complete ownership. It is possible that Morison provided the money for the purchase and maintained his interest in the property until he had been repaid by Hales. In one sweep, therefore, Hales obtained the bulk of the ex-monastic property in the city. The priory and the abbey of Kenilworth were the two largest monastic property-owners in Coventry. Other religious houses held negligible amounts. What Hales had so far obtained in Coventry must have made him easily the single largest private property-owner in the city. Probably only Trinity Guild owned more.

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21. LP, XX, 1, 1335(51).

22. E318/23/1294.

Of perhaps even more significance than the acquisition of so much property in the city by Hales, was his purchase of the leet jurisdiction, or view of frankpledge, which belonged to the priory. This was one of the three leet jurisdictions in Coventry, the others being the city's and that of the tenants of the royal manor of Cheylesmore. It is not clear when Hales acquired this, but he probably did so about the time he acquired the property belonging to the priory. A rental of the guild and chantry lands which the corporation obtained after the Edwardian dissolutions notes that, 'John Hales esq., hath a liberty of a leet, within which liberty is a great quarter of the city, which liberty belonged to the said monastery, and now purchased of the King by the said John Hales'[23]. The 'liberty' which Hales had bought extended to the inhabitants of the Prior's Half of the city, most of which had been the prior's tenants anyway. The jurisdiction was a very real one, giving Hales power to settle disputes and punish offenders, although there are no indications that he ever exercised it. By obtaining it, however, he represented a greater threat to the corporation's authority in the city. The combination of the extensive property which Hales possessed in the Prior's Half of the city, which represented roughly the parish of Holy Trinity, and this leet court in the same area, meant that considerable influence was now concentrated in the hands of one person.

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23. W.G. Fretton, 'The Benedictine Monastery and Cathedral of Coventry'. TBAS (1876), 32.

The corporation appears to have finally purchased Whitefriars church in 1545. The Corporation accounts list a payment of 20s. to Robert Burgoyne 'for the surveying of the Whit freres', which survey found the church to be worth £3 9s. 2d.[24]. That the survey was made with a view to buying the church is suggested in the memorandum appended to the same at the bottom, which stated, that 'ther be ingresse and egresse graunted to the purchasers at the ii Grete Gates called the White frere's Gates, to and from the place forssyd', as stated in the particulars for Sadler's grant of 27 August 1544. This right of access was necessary to establish, and would, of course, have cut across property now belonging to Hales. It seems that the corporation did not obtain the site, etc., of Whitefriars at this time, nor did it do so in the future, for these were snapped up by Hales. On 10 December 1546 particulars were submitted by Sir Ralph Sadler for the site, choir and churchyard of Whitefriars, which were subsequently granted to him on 30 June the following year[25]. The day after this Sadler obtained a licence to alienate this property to Hales.

The property outside the city and its immediate environs has not concerned us so far, but Sadler also obtained by the above grant

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24. CRO, A9, f26; W.G. Fretton, 'Memorials of the Whitefriars, Coventry', TBAS (1872), 67.

25. E318/19/968; CPR Edward VI, i, 257.

Whitmore Grange, Whitmore Park and the commons in Haliswood, all just to the north of the city, which had belonged to the priory. These were also alienated to Hales on 1 July 1547[26]. The purchase of these properties had a direct bearing upon Hales' other acquisitions in the city, for he needed the woods to repair his tenemented properties there. This, and indeed, the background to the whole purchase is explained in three extant letters from Hales to John Hanby, an auditor in the court of Augmentations, in which Hales seeks Hanby's assistance in getting round problems which have arisen over the purchase and expediting of the whole transaction.

The first asks Hanby for a copy of the lease of Whitmore Grange, held by Michael Camswell, and the particulars of the same. Hales perhaps anticipated some difficulty in obtaining the manor, because he reminded Hanby that 'by reason of the death of the Kyng all leases of records must nowe be recited on all patents'[27]. The letter was written after the death of Henry VIII, therefore, which raises the question of how this property could have been included in particulars of early December the previous year. Again it was a question of enlisting the help of his influential friends to permit the requests for purchase to be backdated and included in Sadler's own request.

Hales's second letter is in the form of a survey of Whitefriars. It is often taken to indicate that Hales was in Coventry about the

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26. CPR Edward, I, 225.

27. SP 46/1/24.

time of the dissolution of the friaries there, but this is not the case[28]. Hales found the site of the church, churchyard and choir of Whitefriars to be worth 6s. 8d. 'afte the Byldyngs ben defaced & the grounde made clere'. He tells Hanby, 'I have spoken with Mr. Chauncellor for these particulars, whiche ye seie ye have not in your boke. I have promysee hym to be bounde that if uppon the surveye it shalbe founde to be more worthe then I have set it at to paie the Overplus. Therfor I beseche you hartely helpe me thereto, with as muche spede & favour as ye maye. Mr. Channcellor wyll move the Councell that it maye passe in Mr. Sadleyers Boke of his exchange'[29]. The latter is a reference to the nature of the grant obtained by Sadler on 30 June 1547. In exchange for certain manors, advowsons and 500 marks paid to Henry VIII (and in addition to £1,837 20d. paid by Sadler at the time) he was granted the reversion of all the premises specified in certain named leases, and all the rents reserved to them, as well as various properties, including those wanted by Hales, with which these letters were concerned.

The third letter Hales wrote to Hanby stressed the importance to him of obtaining Whitmore Grange, and the site, etc., of Whitefriars church and churchyard. He told Hanby that his 'chief desire' was to have Whitmore Grange 'because I wolde have the parke wherein is

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28. It is misplaced therefore as LP, XIII, ii, 731.

29. SP1/138.

moche tymber for the reparaton and mantenaunce of my houses in Coventre'. He recognised, however, that there might be some difficulty, because he saw from the particulars, that 'other men have parcell therof as well as Camswell'. Nevertheless, he asked Hanby to do the best he can for him. As regards the site of Whitefriars church, he gave his assurance to Hanby 'that their belongeth nothyng to it but a churchyard, which is not half an acre of grounde at the moste, and if it was voide grounde and the stones cleare of [it] thus wolde no man geve above 63. 8d by the yere'. As for the stone and timber, this, says Hales, 'was geven to Mr fflamock & Mr Pollard who sold it to the citie'. Hales was anxious to obtain this property, for, as he mentions to Hanby, 'I thynk it wilbe harde herafter to come byt it', intimating, perhaps, that he knew of another interested party, probably the corporation. Because of this, he tells Hanby, 'I am the more earnest suter to you therfore And if it be possible let us (i.e. Sadler and himself) have yoo helpe'. From subsequent evidence it is clear that Hanby was able to assist Hales, and the latter got what he wanted. It was to be the last purchase of property Hales made in Coventry[30].

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Hales dominated the property market in Coventry after the Henrician dissolutions, to the detriment not only of the corporation, but also of those citizens who wanted to buy property themselves. Hales did not snap up all the available property, however, and there were a few, if small, grants made to others. Before Hales's purchase

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30. SP46/1/25

of the property belonging to the priory and the abbey at Kenilworth, practically no property in the city and its suburbs belonging to the religious houses had been sold. Apart from the handful of tenements included in the collection of mainly rural properties purchased by the corporation at the end of July 1542, only one other grant of property in the city was made. On 17 June 1542 Richard Andrews and Leonard Chamberlain had obtained a handful of tenements in the city belonging to the priory, and others belonging to the charterhouse, together with some rents and more tenemented property belonging to the former in Counden, Keresley and Radford in the county of the city. Particulars had been submitted on 3 April previously. The grant also included the house and site of the Charterhouse just outside the city, with the church and buildings, etc. Andrews and Chamberlain also obtained some two and a half acres of meadow beside Binley bridge in Warwickshire[31]. The grant to Andrews and Chamberlain was a large one, comprising property belonging to many religious houses. Both are well-known speculators, who acted as middle-men for others. In this case the Coventry property was purchased for Henry Over, to whom it was re-sold on 22 June 1542[32]. This is the same individual who assisted Dr. London so much when the latter was in the city about the suppression of the religious houses.

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31. E 318/1/18; LP., XVII, 443(39).

32. C 142/145/4.

The reason why little of the property belonging to the religious houses in Coventry was sold before Hales's purchase is found in the terms of their tenure. All the property bought by Andrews and Chamberlain was to be held in knight service, which condition was passed on to Over. Joyce Youings has shown that in Devon the insistence by the Crown on attaching military tenure to even the smaller parcels of lands belonging to the religious houses held up their sale. Every grant carried with it a tenure by knight service, which was, she argues, probably acceptable to those aspiring to landed wealth who fined themselves to manorial properties, but was unacceptable to the humbler purchaser of a few odd tenements here and there, or the speculator who could buy on a large scale[33]. The Crown finally realised the unwisdom of trying to attach military tenure to so many small, individual properties in 1544, a time when it was pressed for money for the French war. In March of this year a new commission for the sale of Crown lands was issued, conceding that tenements without land, or single properties worth less than 40s. a year could, at the discretion of commissioners, be granted in free socage or burgage[34]. This is undoubtedly the commission referred to by Hales and Morison in the particulars they submitted on behalf of Combes and Standfield on 1 December 1544. Hales was

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33. Joyce Youings, 'The Terms of the Disposal of Devon Monastic Lands', EHR, (1954), 32-3.

34. LP, XIX, 278(5).

doubtless interested in acquiring the property, but not if the tenure was by knight service, which was why he waited until this time. The corporation may also have been forestalled in their desire to obtain the property after they had gone so far as to obtain particulars relating to the priory in 1543. Joyce Youings draws attention to the failure of the city council of Exeter in 1538 to obtain the site and property of St. Nicholas' priory in the city, and suggests that negotiations may have broken down because the Crown was unwilling to grant property to a corporate body which would never die or leave heirs under age[35]. Did the same thing happen to the negotiations conducted by the city council of Coventry? Or when the conditions of tenure changed, perhaps Hales was the quicker of the two to submit particulars and buy the property. It was unlikely that the corporation would have been able to find the money to purchase so much property anyway.

Henry Over made two other purchases of ex-monastic property in the city, both of which were property formerly belonging to the Charterhouse. The first of these two later purchases was made through Richard and Thomas Lawley, the former from Wenlock, Salop. On 20 September 1545, together with numerous other properties, various tenements and messuages lately belonging to the Charterhouse

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35. Youings, loc. cit.; Joyce Youings, 'The City of Exeter and the Property of the Dissolved Monasteries', Transaction of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art, LXXXIV (1952), 129.

in the city and its suburbs, and fourteen 'leys' and 'le hadland' in the field called Charterhouse Leys between the New Gate and the Charterhouse itself were granted to them. The grant also included Botts Grove in Bedworth parish which belonged to the same house. Over also acquired property formerly belonging to the priory, consisting of three closes of pasture near Gosford Green to the east of the city, and Sowe Pool in Sowe itself[36]. The purchase of the three closes added to Over's already substantial holdings in the south east corner of the city, since among that he obtained through Andrews in 1542 there were nine cottages in Gosford Gate Street without Gosford Gate. The two Lawley's conveyed the property they obtained for Over to him in two parts. On 29 September a licence to alienate the three closes was granted to them, and on 8 October the rest of the property was sold to him[37]. The property which Over received was not all he had wanted, however, as the particulars show. These included a tenement in Cross Cheaping, which belonged to the priory and had been parcel of another grant. Several other tenements, cottages and gardens which had belonged to the priory are listed which were not included in the grant. The particulars also listed 'Bynley meadowe', which was the two and a half acres of meadow at Binley Bridge which Over had obtained in 1542. Why it was listed again is not known, but this was probably another mistake[38].

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36. LP, XX, ii, 496 (34).

37. ibid., 496(68); C142/145/5.

38. E 318/15/692. The tenement in Cross Cheaping was granted to Henry Audley and John Maynard on 30 March 1545. See LP, XX, i, 465 (99) and below, 300.

The other purchase was made through Edward Watson of Rockingham, Northamptonshire, and Henry Herdson of London on 22 July 1546. They obtained the Chapel of St. Anne near the Charterhouse, which the grant says was leased to the monastery for ninety-nine years on 12 October 1526 in return for nine butts of pasture and eleven leys of land in the field called Charterhouse Leys[39]. Over apparently held the lease of these, and the grant included the purchase of the reversion of the lease. He had built up a considerable holding in the Charterhouse Leys by this time, therefore. Also granted were various rents, services and lands in Bramcote (Warwickshire) which had belonged to the Leicester monastey of De. Pratis, and, impossibly, since it had already been granted to Burges and Wotton the previous year, Roberts Grove in Exhall, which belonged to the Charterhouse. There is no explanation for this glaring mistake, and no evidence of any subsequent complications, e.g. a law-suit. The property, etc., in Bramcote was alienated to Over on 3 November 1546, but there is nothing to indicate that the other property was conveyed to him[40]. The Inquisition lists none of it, but this does not rule out the possibility that Over did acquire it, which seems most likely given his interest in the property.

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39. LP., XXI, i, 1283(89); The rental of Trinity Guild's properties for 1532-33 lists the leys and butts leased from the Charterhouse. See G. Templeman (ed.), The Records of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, St. Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Katherine of Coventry, (Dugdale Society, XIX, 1944), 117-118.

40. LP, XXI, ii, 476 (107).

Over also purchased property outside the city and its suburbs belonging to the dissolved monasteries, and he made a number of purchases of guild and chantry lands after the Edwardian dissolution, He stands out as the most significant local figure in the market for confiscated lands. At his death he owned considerable rural and urban estates, and in his case we are uniquely placed to trace his various purchases, because of the inquisition made upon his death in 1567. For some reason those who conducted it listed not only the property he owned, but from where, from whom and when he obtained it. No other surviving Coventry inquisition goes into such detail. It is therefore possible to build up almost a complete picture of his dealings in the land markets after the Henrician and Edwardian dissolutions. His inquisition does not, of course, record any sales of property he may have acquired, since it was interested only in what he owned at his death.

Others in Coventry besides Over made purchases of the monastic lands, such as Thomas Gregory of Stivichal, only lately come to the city. He was not a native of Coventry, nor did he come from the immediate surrounding area, but from Asfordby in Leicestershire. He moved to the city to take up the post of town clerk in 1529. He also held a number of other posts, the most significant of which was surveyor of the lands belonging to Trinity Guild, to which he was appointed in 1534. His interest in obtaining property in Coventry itself was slight, his principal concern being to build up a landed estate outside the city at Stivichall; and most of his

purchases of ex-monastic property were there[41]. His interest in property in the city extended to only a few tenements, and is first noted in late 1544. On 20 September of that year John Maynard of St. Albans, Hertfordshire, entered into a bond of £40 with him, the condition being that Maynard would make an estate to him before the feast of St. Martin next, of a tenement with a garden in Spon Street, in the tenure of William Norton, and another in Smithford Street, in the tenure of Gregory himself, which tenements and garden which had belonged to the priory[42]. In fact, this property was granted to John Burges and Edward Wotton of London, 'doctors in medicine', and not to Maynard, at some time later in the year, along with two other tenements which formerly belonged to the priory and a pasture in Exhall called Roberts Grove, which had belonged to the Charterhouse[43]. Burgess and Wotton were granted a collection of properties lately belonging to several other monasteries as well, and were doubtless acting on behalf of a number of interested parties. It is not clear, however, if they were acting on Maynard's behalf or were dealing directly with Gregory. The picture is complicated by the evidence of particulars for a subsequent

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41. For the acquisition of monastic, guild and chantry lands by Thomas Gregory from family papers, see R. Bearman, 'The Gregory's of Stivichal in the Sixteenth Century; Coventry and Warwickshire History Pamphlets, 8 (1972).

42. CHC/SBT, DR10/411.

43. LP, XX, ii, 800 (11).

purchase made by Maynard and another individual, Henry Audley, in March 1545. The particulars of this grant list a tenement in Smithford Street in the tenure of Gregory, which was subsequently crossed out, but that in Spon Street was not listed at all[44]. It is clear from family papers that Gregory acquired the two tenements, but the route by which he did so remains obscure[45]. The other property obtained by Burges and Wotton, as well as the collection of tenements belonging to the priory and the Charterhouse acquired by Audley and Maynard, presumably went to other interested parties, as it almost certainly did not go to Gregory. None of it is mentioned in the family papers.

A grant was then made of a single tenement in Gosford Street to Richard Andrews and his wife among a large collection of properties on 15 September 1545. The tenement was formerly part of the property in Coventry owned by the monastery of Rewley in Oxfordshire, and was in the tenure of Robert Colman. He was the real purchaser of the property, which was subsequently alienated to him by Andrews and one William Grosse[46]. Here, therefore, is an example of an individual buying up the freehold of property which he had previously leased, and it is to be wondered how many other individuals would have done

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44. E318/2/60.

45. GHC/SBT, DR IO/ 4I5.

46. LP, XX, ii, 496 (29); W.B. Bickley (ed.), Abstract of the Bailiff's Accounts of Monastic and Other Estates in the County of Warwick, (Dugdale Society, ii, 1923), I30.

the same thing had Hales not stepped in first. We have already seen this practice in Gregory's acquisition of a tenement in Smithford Street, and it is to be a noticeable feature of the disposal of the lands belonging to the guilds and chantries in Edward VI's reign. Colman was different from Gregory, however, in that the latter went on to buy further large amounts of ex-monastic lands (and, as we shall see, some belonging to the guilds and chantries) whereas Colman does not appear to have bought any more.

By the end of Henry VIII's reign, practically all the property in Coventry and the suburbs belonging to any religious house had been sold by the Crown. What little remained was of no consequence. The corporation had signally failed to achieve what it wanted, namely, to save the two friary churches and the cathedral church. It had acquired Whitefriars church,but this was not going to make much difference to the city's lack of churches. The corporation had also failed to obtain any of the property belonging to either Whitefriars or the priory, despite its express interest in both. Moreover, it had not acquired the sites of any of the houses in the city, with the exception of that of Greyfriars, and this only through the generosity of Thomas White of London. The corporation's failure to secure any of its aims was due to its lack of money. If it had offered to buy the two friary churches, the property belonging to the Whitefriars, the cathedral church and the property belonging to the priory when it wrote to Cromwell at the time of the suppression of these houses, the Crown would probably have

readily sold the name to it. Henry would not give them away. And now with the accession of Edward VI the corporation faced the same problem again, but compounded this time by the dishonourable way in which the city was treated by the new regime.

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Before going on to discuss the disposal of the guild and chantry lands under Edward VI, we will digress for a while and look at some of the subsequent re-sales of the ex-religious property in Coventry, more specifically that purchased by Hales. Our discussion of the disposal of the ex-religious property in the city has concentrated on the initial sales, and will continue to do so with regard to the guild and chantry lands. The fate of property confiscated as a result of the Henrician and Edwardian dissolutions after the initial grant by letters patent will not concern us much. In Hales's case we are dealing with someone exceptional, however, because he acquired so much of the available ex-monastic property. This catapulted him, an outsider, into a prominent and influential position in Coventry. He held his estate in the city together in its original form for less than five years, however, whereupon began to sell parts to the inhabitants, mainly in small parcels comprising a single or perhaps a handful of properties.

The surviving evidence suggests that these sales took place between mid-1549 and late 1550. On 14 April 1549 Hales sold a messuage in Greyfriars Lane, which belonged to the priory, to

Thomas Gregory[47]. On 7 May he sold five cottages with gardens and a croft outside the New Gate, and another cottage in Much Park Street, to Henry Over[48]. On 26 July Thomas Wheatley obtained six cottages in the Bull Ring and Ironmonger Row, formerly belonging to the priory[49]. There is then a break in the surviving deeds, suggesting that Hales stopped selling his property, presumably because of his imprisonment in the Tower between October 1549 and early 1550. Hales had advanced under Somerset, doubtless thanks to his friendship with Sadler, himself a friend of the Protector. So it was that the latter's fall resulted in his imprisonment[50]. Upon his release he spent his time preparing to go into exile. Perhaps the sales he made prior to his imprisonment were prompted by his realization that Somerset's position was becoming untenable. After his release from the Tower sales resumed. On 9 April Hales sold to John Wade a messuage with a garden in Bishop Street, which belonged to the priory, a close or pasture called the Pool Yard and four pools in the same and a garden, all of which lay within the precincts of the priory[51]. On 10 July 1550 Thomas Wheatley acquired another five cottages in Ironmonger Row, which belonged to the priory[52]. Not all the sources for this story are deeds of sale themselves. For example, in his will of 12 September 1550 Philip Sherrarde made the following bequest: 'Item, I give and bequeythe unto

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47. GHC/SBT DR10/415.

48. C142/145/4.

49. CRO, Access. IOI/I38/I7.

50. A.J.Slavin, op.cit., 38.

51. GHC/SBT, DR10/416.

52. CRO, Access. IOI/I38/I8.

Isabell my wyff my tenement taynter yarde and Crofte and all other such lands as I purchased of John Hales Esquyer during her lif'[53]. On 1 October Hales sold to John Bridde two cottages with gardens in Spon Street 'in the suburbs of Coventre', i.e., outside Spon Gate, another cottage with a garden and a selion of land and pasture attached in the same street, which belonged to the Hospital of St. John the Baptist, another cottage and a garden in the same street, and two little crofts lying together in the same, which belonged to the priory[54]. Lastly, from a subsequent re-sale of the property, on 4 November 1553, we know that about this time Hales sold William Saunders a messuage in Dog Lane, which belonged to the hospital of St. John the Baptist[55].

There is no way of knowing how much property Hales disposed of at this time. He wanted ready money in order to pay for his immediate expenses in fleeing the country. Presumably, he worked out with his friends some way of receiving money once he had established himself on the Continent, and he would not have sold more than he needed. This re-distribution, while it released a large amount of ex-monastic property onto the market compared with what there was already, would have been small in comparison to what he retained. Then in the first days of January 1551 he enfeoffed

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53. LJRO, Sherarde, Philip, 13/4/51.

54. GHC/SBT, DR. 10/417.

55. WRO, Holy Trinity Parish, DR 429/75

to use all the property he still held in the city and its suburbs and elsewhere for the benefit of his family and friends.

On 2 January 1551 Hales enfeoffed all his property in the city which had belonged to St. John's hospital to his brother Stephen, his heirs' and assigns', except the house and site of the same which he reserved to himself. On 4 January he conveyed more property, including the house and site of Whitefriars, together with twenty messuages or tenements and twenty gardens in the city which belonged to the same, to Sir Ralph Sadler, Thomas Marowe, Thomas Greville and Edward Hasilwood, their heirs and assigns for Hales's life, that of his brother Christopher's and their heirs and assigns. The site of the cathedral priory and all the property which belonged to it was enfeoffed to his brother Stephen, his heirs and assigns. This property had been enfeoffed to Hales's use, but Hales then made several feoffments to his brother Stephen to his use, his heirs' and assigns', including, in return for 1000 marks, the house, church and site of St. John's Hospital and all properties belonging to the same in the suburbs of Coventry and in the country of the city[56]. Having settled his affairs, on 2 February 1551 Hales obtained a licence to leave the country with his brother-in-law Sir Richard Morison, who was sent as ambassador to Charles V[57]. He remained abroad from about this time until the accession of Elizabeth.

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56. E159/337, unfol.

57. CPR Edward VI, IV, 196.

Hales was a strong Protestant. But he fled the country for political, not religious, reasons. However, religion was his reason for staying abroad after 1553, and this year, on 20 August, he relinquished his claim to his Whitefriars property in favour of his brother Christopher[58]. During Mary's reign he lived in Germany, and consorted with the English exiles, particularly at Frankfurt, where he was later joined by his brother Christopher. In July 1556 Hales and others at Frankfurt were presented with letters from the Queen summoning them back to England[59]. Hales was the more vociferous in his refusal to return, and, perhaps as a result of his attitude in 1557, an attempt was made to confiscate his property. The reports of the commissioners appointed for this purpose explain how the various enfeoffments which he made in January 1551 forestalled confiscation of his property. The returns also show that Stephen Hales had since sold more property, probably about the beginning of Mary's reign, perhaps to provide Hales with more funds: seven messuages in Spon Street in the possession of William Kitchen and five in Cook Street in the possession of John Hyndman, which had belonged to St. John's Hospital. There were also two tenements in Cross Cheaping in the possession of John Saunders, three messuages in

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58. E159/337, unfol.

59. I.S. Leadam, 'A Narrative of the Pursuit of English Refugees in Germany under Queen Mary, TRHS, new series, xl (1896), 113-131.

Palmer Lane in that of Roger Adnet, four messuages in the Great Butchery in that of Richard Sewall and another four in the same place in the possession of Johh Saunders, which had formerly belonged to the cathedral priory. On 10 July 1557, some six months later, Stephen Hales sold a tenement or cottage with a garden in Bishop Street to Henry Over[60].

Comparatively little of the property which Hales owned in the city was subsequently resold during his lifetime, and had he been more 'flexible' politically it is unlikely he would have disposed of any. The main dispersal of his properties in Coventry occurred after his death thanks to his will. Made on 17 December 1572, it broke up his estate in the city. He left instructions that his Whitefriars property was to be sold by his executors, and the money used to buy land for his nephew John Hales the younger (and his heirs male), whom he designated as his lawful heir. He was a minor ar this time. Hales bequeathed the site of the cathedral priory, two yards, a dye house and a mill, which had belonged to the same, 'with all the libertyes and pryvelyges of the same church for their lands in Coventre', to his brother Stephen, provided he permitted Hales' servant Richard Rogers 'to enioy durynge his life all the 'Waiffes Strayes and other profytts belonging to the Courte and libertyes'. To the same servant Hales also bequeathed a house in Well Street, presumably belonging to the cathedral priory. To his brother, Bartholomew, Hales bequeathed his

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60. C142/145/4.

messuage or inn called 'The Bear' in the city. These were all the bequests in his will[61].

On the day that he made his will Hales conveyed lands to Thomas Docwra and his brother Bartholomew to endow the free school in Coventry that he had agreed to found some twenty-seven years before. These consisted of the site, house, church and precincts of St. John's hospital, together with all the property in the city belonging to the same, all property in the city belonging to the cathedral priory and to the monastery of Kenilworth and several mills[62]. Even now the school was not properly founded and endowed, but a full discussion of the circumstances surrounding this affair is given later on[63]. Therefore, for almost thirty years the bulk of the ex-monastic property in Coventry was concentrated in the hands of one man, but all at once it passed out of that person's hands into those who coveted it most, and not by purchase, but by way of a gift. The corporation was to be fortunate again in another two years, for, when Stephen Hales died in 1574, he left instructions in his will that certain of his properties in Coventry were to be used to pay his debts[64]. The Corporation Account for this year show

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61. PCC, 8 Peter; Wards 7/14/41.

62. Sharpe, op. cit. 163-64.

63. See below, 386-87.

64. PCC, 25 Martyn.

that on 27 October £200 was paid to Charles Hales, Stephen's son, in part payment of £400 'for the seyte of the late pryory'[65], but this failed to mention another very important part of the purchase. On 22 January of the following year the corporation paid the outstanding £200 to Bridget Hales, Stephen's widow, and Charles Hales 'for the purchase of the Scite & presinke of the late monastery of our blessed lady the virgin Within the Cittie of Coventrye With the Dyehouse & milne lyenge with the same monasterye & the leet called the Byssopsslete'[66]. Both the site of the monastery, etc., and the leet jurisdiction were important to the corporation, the former because it gave them ownership of a large area in the centre of the city and the latter because by this purchase the corporation secured the last of the three leet jurisdictions, thereby at last making itself pre-eminent in the city.

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There would be nothing to say about the disposal of the guild and chantry lands in Coventry had the Crown kept its promise to return them. However, the Crown, having secured the passage of the Chantries Act, made no move to return the guild lands to either Coventry or Lynn. There is extant a draft of a petition to the Duke of Somerset from the corporation asking for the lands, which probably prompted the meeting of the Privy Council on 6 May 1548[67].

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65. CRO, A16, unfol.

66. CRO, A79/68B.

67. CRO, W1098.

The petition follows a now familiar line. It stresses 'the greyte povertye Ruyne & decay of the Cytye Apparent to the yes of all men Whych Ruyne & decay is very lyke dayly to decrease the Inhabytaunts manred [?] & people of the seid cyty unlese some especyall ayde & socoe be therunto mynysteryd & shewyd'. A memorandum at the end of the draft to the bearers of the petition prompt them to to make sure that the Duke of Somerset 'be fullye Instructyd of the nomber of howselyng people at this day & of the nombre about or xl yeres heretofore & of all soche matters whiche may enforce & sett forth the decaye of the manred of the Cyte'.

It seems from the minute of the Privy Council that the meeting accepted the corporation's argument that the guild and chantry lands could not 'conveniently (as it was thought) be taken away... without putting the said cite to apparent desolacion'. It was ordered that letters patent should be drawn up 'whereby the said Guyld landes belonging to the two churches at Coventre should be newly graunted unto them of the cite for ever'[68]. Similarly, the Privy Council accepted Lynn's argument, and as a result, the guild lands of Lynn were soon after returned. Those belonging to Coventry were not, however, and soon afterwards the Crown even began selling them off. The corporation continued to submit petitions for their return, but the Crown would have none of them. Coventry had been the victim of a confidence trick perpetrated by the Crown against whom there was no redress.

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68. APC, II, 1547-1550, 193-95.

The corporation, having failed to obtain the guild lands as promised, sought to obtain the church of St. John the Baptist at least, and petitioned the King to grant the city this[69]. In consequence of their petition, on 13 December 1548 the mayor, bailiffs and communalty of Coventry were granted the church of Bablake, with its steeple and churchyard, to hold them of the king and his successors by the service of 1d. a year in free burgage. The service may only have been nominal, but it nonetheless indicates that the Crown was going to have some profit, however small, from all the recently acquired lands of the guilds and chantries. The king granted the bells, lead, iron, glass, jewels and ornaments belonging to the church as a gift to the city[70]. This was all that the corporation had recovered of the guild lands in the year since the Crown had promised to return all of them. It was small recompense, even if the city had saved a much-needed church. But without lands to support it its maintenance would stretch the corporation's own resources to breaking-point.

It was to be another four years before the city recovered any of the guild and chantry lands, after a sizeable proportion of them had already been sold in the interim to private purchasers. The Crown had not finally decided to honour its promise, however, for the grant was no gift. The corporation paid £1315 20d. for lands worth £100, plus another £90 worth of lands which were to be held in fee farm of the Crown, and received by way of a gift lands to

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69. CRO, F5(C)

70. CPR, Edward VI, II, 81.

the value of only £6 9s. 3d. a year. The circumstances surrounding the grant are explained in a letter from the Privy Council to the chancellor of the court of Augmentations and in the resulting particulars. The letter, dated 24 March 1552, refers to 'sundry houses gardens rents lands and other hereditaments of late belonginge to the late guildes comonlye called the Trinitie gilde and corpus xpi gilde and to certain frechapells chantries obyts and suche lyke within the cyte of Coventre', which corporation had made suit to the king for. It had probably given up all hope of ever securing them as a gift, but until then had not had the money to purchase them. In the event, this was given to them by Thomas White of London[71]. The letter went on to say how the king had been of late 'crediblie enformed of the great decaies of the saide houses dayly fallinge downe for want of reparacons to the great defacynge of the saide citie', which was doubtless the reason why it had been decided to let the corporation have them. They were unattractive properties, unlikely to be sold on the open market because so much would have to be spent on them in repairs, and the Crown would have been receiving little income from the rents of such dilapidated properties.

Nevertheless, the Crown was determined to take some long-term profit from them. The Privy Council instructed the chancellor of the Augmentations to grant to the corporation 'thone half of the saide rents lands gardens houses and tenements in fefarme for suche

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71. See below, 409-10.

reasonable yerelie rente havinge respecte to the decaies reperacons rents resolute fees and other charges as upon Survey therof shall by you be thought Conveniente'. The other half were to be sold to the corporation, and the letter instructed the chancellor to make or cause to be made, a 'boke... in due form for the passinge of the premisses', which was to be sent to the Privy Council for it to send on to the king for his signature. The Privy Council also stated the form which the'book' was to take. It was to differentiate between 'howesinge and gardens annexed to them' and 'quite rents and rents of assize', which were to be rated differently, but the rate itself was not mentioned. The chancellor was told that, 'in the making of this boke you must leave blanks accordyng for the somes to be supplied as shall please the Kings majestie upon sight of the boke'. The grant was handled from first to last by the Privy Council and the king and did not go through the normal channels[72].

The particulars pick up the story here. Submitted on 4 July 1552, they open with a request in the name of the mayor, bailiffs and communalty to have the lands specified 'in purchase and ffee farme', although, clearly, the form of the purchase was not the corporation's. Explaining the manner in which the property was rated, the particulars state, 'The Kings maiesties pleasure is by thadvise of his moost honourable prevey counsell that the mayor and commonaltie of the Cyte of Coventre shall have of his highnes in purchase so muche of thaforsaid landes tenementes hosies

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72. CRO, A79/61C.

Cotages and gardeyns and other the premisses as shall amounte unto the Clere yearly valew of oon hundreth poundes in manor and forme following'. The corporation was to be allowed to buy 'the moyte' of all the 'landes fre rentes and rentes of assise' to the yearly value of £31 10s. 2d. at twenty years purchase, which amounted to £630 3s. 4d., and the remaining property worth £68 9s. 10d, at ten years purchase, which amounted to £684 18s. 4d. The total purchase price was £1315 20d. There remained properties worth £96 9s. 3d. Of the 'landes fre rentes and rentes of assise' of these, the corporation was to have the most part of them amounting to £31 10s. 2d., and of the 'houses Cotages and gardens' among these properties the corporation was to have the most part also amounting to £63 9s. 2d., which altogether amounted to lands worth £90. These the corporation was to hold in fee farm, paying yearly to the king, his heirs and successors the sum of £90 a year. As far as the residue of the lands was concerned, the particulars stated that, 'his highnes further pleasure is that the said mayor and comminaltie shall have £6 9s. 3d. beinge residue of the said some of £496 9s. 3d. to them and to ther successors of his maiesties fre gifte towardes the reparacons of the houses Cotages gradyns aforsaid'[73].

The extent to which the corporation had been cheated may be seen from the estimates of the value of the property belonging to both guilds. By the original agreement between the MPs for Coventry and Somerset the corporation stood to receive property valued at

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73. E318/26/1548.

£222 2s. 6d. The property belonging to Trinity Guild was estimated to be worth £178 13s. 6d. by the Edwardian chantry commissioners, and that of Corpus Christi £43 9s.[74]. These were to be re-granted to the city free of charge. Given the change in circumstances after the sales of guild lands by the Crown, the corporation then sought a grant of other guild and chantry lands, in lieu of the original guild lands. It was adding insult to injury to force the corporation to buy back half the remaining lands and encumber most of the other half with a massive yearly fee farm rent, and then to present it with a pittance by way of a gift. The corporation and the city had no reason to like the Edwardian regime.

The acquisition of this collection of guild and chantry property by the corporation meant that a number of institutions supported by them could be saved for the city. For example, the corporation recovered the shops of the Drapery, the Wool Hall and the Welsh Drapery, collectively the centre for the sale of cloth in the city, and part of the property belonging to Trinity Guild. The corporation also recovered Ford's almshouse and some of its endowment. The grant included 'the late chantry called Fordes and Pisfordes Chauntry alias Fordes Almeshowes in the city of Coventry and the messuages, etc.,... in the said city and suburbs and in Weston, Kyrsbury [Keresley], Allspath, Meryden and Gadysbye or elsewhere in the counties of the said caity and

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74. E301/53, ff I, 3.

and of Leicester and Warwick which belonged to the Fordes Chauntry'. Bond's almshouse was specifically exempted from the grant, because of the recent suit in Chancery, between the corporation and Thomas Bond the younger, grandson of the founder, which had recently been brought to a conclusion in favour of the corporation.

The corporation also had limited success in recovering the churches and chapels which had been swept away by the Edwardian dissolutions. It had recovered the church of St. John's Bablake in 1548, which belonged to Trinity Guild. The grant of 1552 included St. George's Chapel at Gosford Gate, which belonged to the Shermen and Tailors Guild, although it was no longer used as a chapel, as is clear from the letters patent. The corporation received 'the two messuages in which the poor now dwell in Gosford Strete, Coventry, which belonged to the late guild called Taylours and Shermans alias Saincte Georges Chappell in the city of Coventry'. It seems it had been converted into an almshouse and some time. The church of St. Nicholas, which belonged to Corpus Christi Guild, is not mentioned in the grant, nor in any other grant, and was probably included in the blanket phrase at the end of the grant of the Corpus Christi Guild lands, which gave the corporation 'all other possessions of that guild'. By this time however, it was in a ruinous state, no longer being used as a church but as a store house. The Weavers Chapel of St. James is not mentioned in the grant either, but appears to

have been completely overlooked by the chantry commissioners, for it was still in the craft's hands and remained so - still being used as a place of worship in the late sixteenth century. St. Mary's Magdalene's Chapel at Gosford Gate was not mentioned either in the grant to the corporation. The reason for this was not that it had escaped official notice but that it formed part of a subsequent grant of properties[75].

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There were a total of thirteen private grants of lands belonging to the guilds and chantries in Coventry, all but two of which were made before the corporation's purchase in 1552. In most cases it is impossible to establish who actually acquired the property, but in a few cases this has been done. For example, Henry Over, the largest single private purchaser of guild and chantry lands in the city, bought a series of small collections of properties over a period of several years. And there are a number of instances when other Coventry citizens ventured to make a single purchase, or even acquire a single property. Otherwise, however, few of the real purchasers can be identified.

The Crown was quick to sell off the city's guild and chantry lands, and the first sale was made on 15 September 1548, after

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75. CPR Edward VI, I, 389; For condition of St. Nicholas' Church, see Sharpe, op. cit., 128-29.

particulars had been submitted on 6 July, a month after the Privy Council's fateful meeting of 6 May[76]. The grant consisted of five tenements and a cottage, which belonged to Trinity Guild. They were sold to William Boxe of London, acting on behalf of Thomas Downes of Coventry, to whom he conveyed the property on 1 October following[77]. The property was in several tenures, including a tenement and a cottage held by Downes himself. It is possible that he was in turn acting on behalf of Thomas Gregory, for on 23 October he sold him a tenement in Warwick Lane, two tenements in Fleet Street and a tenement in Broad Gate[78]. This last tenement was in the tenure of Gregory himself, who had obtained the lease from the guild on 20 December 1539[79]. His former post as surveyor of the guild's property put him in a good position to know which were its better properties, but his interest in acquiring property was concentrated elsewhere than in the city, and he was to make no further purchase of property.

There followed three purchases made by or for members of the Fisher family of Coventry and Warwick. Thomas Fisher achieved prominence in Edward VI's reign as a servant to the Duke of Somerset. On 21 May 1549 John Hulson and Bartholomew Brokesby of London bought a single messuage in the tenure of John Fisher of Coventry (Thomas Fisher's brother) called 'The Kynges Hedde' in Smithford Street, which had belonged to the late Trinity Guild. Fisher was

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76. E318/25/1435, CPR Edward VI, I, 389.

77. SBT/GHC, DR 10/413.

78. ibid., DR 10/414.

79. ibid., DR10/409.

buying the freehold of property he already leased[80]. There then followed two grants of property to Thomas Fisher, who is described in the particulars of each as 'servant of the Lord Protector'. On 28 June 1549 Fisher, together with Thomas Dabrigcourte obtained a grant of the lands formerly belonging to the chantry of Sutton Coldfield in Stivichall and Coventry, Richard Marler's chantry in Holy Trinity and other lands in Coventry and its suburbs which had been given to support lights, lamps and obits in churches in the city and Warwickshire. The particulars state that the property was 'rated' for Fisher himself, but subsequent re-sales suggest that he had bought them for other interested parties[81]. The property which had belonged to the chantry of Sutton Coldfield in Stivichall was sold to Thomas Gregory on 12 August 1549, but the fate of the property which belonged to the same chantry in Coventry is not known[82]. The properties which Gregory acquired he already leased, and had done since 12 June 1542[83]. The lands formerly belonging to Marler's chantry, with the exception of certain rents in Exhall and Foleshill, were in Henry Over's possession at the time of his death, and they too had been sold to him on 12 August 1549[84]. The subsequent history of those lands which went to support lights, lamps and anniversaries is now known.

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80. E318/30/1716; CPR Edward VI, II, 229.

81. E318/28/169; CPR Edward VI; II, 342.

82. SBT/GMC, DR10/769.

83. ibid., DR10/758.

84. C142/145/5.

The third purchase involving Fisher was that made on his behalf by John Nethermyll of Coventry and John Milward of Ansley, Warwickshire on 18 September 1549, of property 'rated' for him[85]. It comprised former possessions of Percy's and Copston's chantries, a single property belonging to Pysford's Chantry and Ford's almshouse and all the lands which John Haddon had given to support two priests to pray for him and for an anniversary in St. Michael's. A special reason was given by Nethermyll for wanting this latter property which explains why he was acting for Fisher. The particulars reports that, 'John Nethermyll Claymethe the premisses Not onelye by dissent ffrom Julyne Nethermyll his ffather servivar of thother cofeoffees of the said John Haddon, But also by Release from the heyres of the said John Haddon, yet ffor that the proffits thereof have bene hytherto Employed to thuse above said (wherefore I suppose yt to be within the Compas of the statutes he ys Content) he ys Content to enter in Cominicacon with ye Kynges Maiestie as hitherto Answered, but a Rent going owte of the said lands for that the said Julyne Nethermyll nor his heyres were at anye tyme owte of possession thereof, But have bene seasid thereof paying onlye A Rent ffor the mayntenaunce of the said two preests and one obit, And A Rent of iiii^{li} Residue of the premisses payable yerelye to the ffellowshippe of Crafte of the drapers in the said Cytye of Coventry according to the will and demyse of the said John Haddon bearing date the xxiiii day of Marche Anno 1518'. Nethermyll, it seems, had claimed exemption from the terms of the

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85. CPR, Edward VI. III, 21.

dissolution statute for the lands given by Haddon to support two priests and an anniversary obit, even though, as the memorandum points out, he had accepted that they had been given for these purposes. Nethermyll appears to have argued that not all the rents from the lands had been used to support the priests and obit, but this argument was evidently rejected[86].

On 1 February 1550 William Mildmaye of Chelmsford, Essex, and Thomas Nundes of Springfield in the same county, purchased several lands, pastures and meadows called 'Lytle Poding', 'le Roo of Okes Felde' and 'le Conyngre', which had belonged to Percy's Chantry, and 'the mansion and hall called Nycholas Hall' in the West Orchard, which belonged to Corpus Christi Guild[87]. This property was part of a much larger grant, which was 'rated' for Clement Throckmorton, inter alios[88]. One of the other interested parties was Henry Over. On 8 February the property belonging to Percy's Chantry was conveyed to him by Mildmaye and Nundes[89]. As for St. Nicholas Hall, its fate is not known, except that on 10 September 1579 Christopher Rice the elder and Christopher Rice the younger gave by way of gift to Arthur Gregory, the son of Thomas Gregory, the rent of 6s. 'issuing out of a capital messuage formerly belonging to Thomas Braye and Christiana his wife in Le Weste Orcharde in Coventry commonly called St. Nicholas Hall'[90]. The property may have changed hands a number

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86. E318/32/1811.

87. CPR Edward VI, III, 219

88. E318/32/1786.

89. C142/14/5.

90. SBT/GHC, DR10/423.

of times before this time, which does not assist us in identifying the person for whom it was originally purchased.

On 15 May 1550 the second largest grant of guild and chantry property in the city was made to Thomas Reve, gentleman, John Johnson and Henry Herdson of London. It included considerable amounts of property formerly belonging to both guilds, seven chantries (Copston's, Preston's Allesley's, Sheppy's, Hayes', Merynton's and Pysford's) and Ford's almshouse[91]. Most of the property which had belonged to Trinity Guild was in Henry Over's possession when he died and had been sold to him by Reve, Johnson and Herdson on 22 May 1550[92]. Perhaps he purchased all the property belonging to the guild, but had sold some of it before his death. Of the remaining property little is known, except that what had belonged to Pysford's Chantry and Ford's almshouse had been 'rated' for one Henry Hynde, who was a citizen of Coventry[93]. Hynde, a mercer, was a prominent figure in the wealthy Bailly Lane ward. He was a warden in 1520, and thereafter a regular member of the city council until his death in 1554.

All the property formerly belonging to the Shearmen and Tailors Guild, with the exception of St. George's chapel, including a mansion house of the same called 'le lodge' and a water mill, were granted to William Place, gentleman and Nicholas Spakeman

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91. CPR Edward VI, III, 374.

92. C142/14/5.

93. E318/34/1904; LB, 736, 667 et seq.

of London on 11 July 1550[94]. The property was parcel of a larger grant and was undoubtedly bought on behalf of someone else, whose identity is not known. The religious activities of this craft guild seems to have ceased to exist after the Edwardian dissolutions, and the Shearmen and Tailors, who had been the only one licenced to hold lands in mortmain, lost their unique position among the other crafts in the city.

There then follow two grants for which the particulars do not survive. The first comprised a row cottages and a messuage in Coventry which had belonged to Corpus Christi Guild. It was granted to William Wynlowe and Richard Felde of London on 17 July 1550, among an extensive grant of ex-monastic, guild and chantry property[95]. Who the property in Coventry had been purchased for is not known. The other grant was of a single messuage in Fleet Street, which had belonged to St. Mary's College in Warwick, among a collection of properties granted to Nicholas le Straunge of Hunstanton, Northamptonshire, knight, on 23 July 1550[96]. Again, the real purchaser of this property is not known.

There were no further grants of guild and chantry lands for almost two years, but this was not for any reason peculiar to

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94. CPR Edward VI, III, 408.

95. ibid., III, 282.

96. ibid., III, 334.

Coventry. The sales of guild, chantry and remaining monastic lands generally declined during roughly the same period. Sales of the first began in April 1548, reaching a climax in 1549-1550, after which they declined in number until a final burst in 1553[97]. The sales of the Coventry lands mirrored the national pattern, therefore. The temporary drop in sales at this time was beneficial to the corporation, since it at least prevented others from acquiring the lands which it could not obtain itself.

In early 1552 sales of Coventry's guild and chantry lands resumed. Only two grants were made before the corporation's purchase. On 17 March a close or pasture called Honey Close 'next the city of Coventry', which had belonged to Trinity Guild, was included in a large grant of properties to Lord Clinton and Saye 'in recompense', presumably for services to the Crown[98]. This was followed on 11 May by a grant of a collection of lands to the inhabitants of Nuneaton to endow a grammar school there called 'the Free Grammer School of King Edward VI', including three closes, a parcel of land called 'le Morefeld' and two parcels of land called "Cherterleys' which formerly belonged to Trinity Guild in the tenure of Henry Over, and land called 'le Penyfeldis' and two crofts, which had belonged to Corpus Christi Guild[99].

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97. W.K. Jordan, Edward VI: Vol, I, The Young King, (1968), 191-92.

98. CPR Edward VI., IV, 370.

99. ibid., IV , 293.

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After the corporation's purchase there remained very little property in the city formerly belonging to religious houses, guilds and chantries. On 26 May 1553 Edward Auglionby of Balsall and Henry Higford of Solihull were granted a close of land in the city which belonged to the late guild of St. Mary and Holy Cross in Chesterfield, and all the messuages, shops, etc., 'in Lytle Parkestrete, Miche Perekstreet, Gosfordstrete, Millane, Angell Lane, Bayly Lane, Erlestreet and Cokestrete and outside Cokestrete Yate and at Jurdenwell', which formed the bulk of the property lately belonging to Rewley monastery in Oxfordshire[100]. The guild property was 'rated' for Henry Over and conveyed to him on 16 June following[101]. The particulars reveal that monastic property was rated for Richard Racke, servant to Sir Philip Hoby, but who obtained it thereafter is not known. The reason why it had taken so long for this property to be sold was the extreme decay of the tenements, which also resulted in their being sold very cheaply. The particulars state that, 'the premisses were sumetyme of the yerelye value of £11 8s. 2d. But nevertheless by reason of the greate Ruyne and decaye of the moste parte of the same, the Kings maisstie was neversythence they came to his highness's possession aniswerid more then 69s. But uppon Surveye thereof taken by the Surveyors the sayle of suche howses as are

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100. ibid., IV, 235.

101. C142/145.

fallen downe to the ground Beinge valued and reated as above particulars apperyth by thoathe and presentament of divers honest men of the same towne amountinge to 10s. 6d. of new increasedothe witn the said 69s. Rise to Summe of 79s. 6d. above declared'. The property was sold at sixteen years' purchase for £53 12s., or almost a third of the optimum sale price of £176 15s. 4d. This document paints a very gloomy picture of the city at this time, particularly in its reference to houses 'fallen to the ground'[102].

The last remnants of property held by the Crown were sold in the first years of Mary's reign. There were three grants, consisting of the single messuage and garden in the city, which formerly belonged to Stoneleigh priory to Thomas Reve and George Cotton on 29 May 1554, that of 'a garden and a parcel of land called 'a washing place' in the parish of Holy Trinity, Coventry, behind the back of the barn of the late prior of the cathedral of St. Mary there', which had belonged to the priory, to Peter Temple and Richard Petiffer on 18 July 1554, and the Chapel of St. Mary Magdelene with a cemetery, and a parcel of land near the grove of St. Anne to Ambrose Gilbarde and Richard Allynton, both of Lincoln's Inn on 27 September 1554[103].

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102. E318/28/1595.

103. CPR Mary, I, 95.

As far as the first two grants are concerned, the real purchasers are not known, but the third was purchased on behalf of Henry Over, to whom the property was sold immediately by Gilbarde and Allynton on the day they received the grant[104]. The chapel and cemetery was at Gosford Green, the grove near St. Anne's Chapel - both areas in which Over had already bought a good deal of property. He now owned considerable holdings just outside the city to the south east between Gosford Street without Gosford Gate and the London Road outside New Gate.

In 1557 the corporation petitioned Mary for the lead and bells of Whitefriars church. The Corporation Accounts for this year list a payment of 5s. 'for the drawing & engrosing of a subplicacon to the quene for the Whit frers'[105]. The particulars for the grant made to Sir Ralph Sadler on 30 June 1547, of the site of the church, choir and churchyard of Whitefriars, contained the following memorandum, that 'the churche of the saide White ffreers remaynith indefaced in eny parte therof parcell wherof is coverid with leade conteyning by estimacon as apereth in the Receivor his Accompte according to the measure thereof taken at the tyme of the Surrender thirtie three fothers ratid in the saide Accompte a £4 the fother amounting to the some of £132 which leade was comitted to the charge and oversight of the Maire and aldermen of the Cytie of

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104. C142/145.

105. CRO, A9, f75.

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104. C142/145.

105. CRO, A9, f75.

Coventre to the Kings maiesties use. Item there is also remayning in the steaple of the said late freers by report of the Receivor one Bell the nombre quantitie and content of the weight whereof doth not appere in theaccompt of the same Receivor'[106]. Presumably this was what the corporation petitioned the queen for.

Mary's judgement was given in a letter to William Berners, Thomas Mildmay and John Wyseman 'commissioners in certain our affairs'[107] in 1558. Evidently, the corporation had also set down its now familiar argument. The grant said thatthere were a great number of people in the city but only two parish churches to serve them, etc., and used as an example to show its concern for the church the fact that it had bought the rights to the materials of the same from Flammock and Pollard. The corporation need not have feared rebuff this time, however, for adequate provision for worshop was a necessary part of the regeneration of the Catholic faith planned by Reginald Pole. The lead and bells belonging to Whitefriars church were readily granted to the corporation: 'We Considering the godlye entent of our said Subjects and the chardges that they have begat in buying of the saide Tymber Tilles and other the premisses and myndyng the contynuaunce of the divine service and adorning of the said Churches to the glorie of Gode of our especale graces and mere

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106. E318/19/968.

107. CRO, F6.

motions we are pleased and contented to geve graunte pardone remitte and release unto the saide Maior Aldermen and Inhabitants of our saide Citie of Coventrie and to their successors for ever the saide two'.

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There is some evidence of concealment of lands given to support masses and prayers at the time of the Edwardian dissolutions. On 19 February 1574 Christopher Fenton and Bernard Gylpyn of London were granted a large collection of concealed lands in various countries, including 'lands appurtenant to the society of 'le Draperye' in Coventrie, given by John Haddon for a priest in the church of Rowley, co. Stafford'[108]. Then on 22 September 1575 Johh Herbert and Andrew Palmer also of London were granted another collection of concealed lands in a number of different countries, including some obit lands in Coventry[109]. The discrepancy between the number of obits, stipendary priests, etc., in the Coventry churches discovered by the Edwardian chantry commissioners and the number listed on surviving wills, has already been pointed out. The two grants mentioned above probably represented only a small fraction of the total amount of concealed lands. C.J. Kitching found that lands given to maintain prayers and masses were the most common form of concealed lands. They were the easiest to hide, 'since there were scarcely any accurate account

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108. CPR Elizabeth I, VI, 2120

109. ibid, 2382.

books and few save the priest and the donor knew the exact sums involved'[110]. There must have been many of these lands in Coventry that escaped the Edwardian chantry commissioners. The spoliation of the Church was not confined to those who made official purchases of confiscated property.

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110. G. Kitching, 'The Quest for Concealed Lands in the Reign of Elizabeth', TRHS, 5th series, 24 (1974), 65.

CHAPTER VI

Piety and Charity

The subject of charity is so large as to require individual treatment, although this does not mean that it was isolated from other activities. It was an integral part of the religious life of Coventry, as elsewhere, since charitable giving was inextricably bound up with the Church and its doctrine. The secular authorities did not concern themselves with many of the areas covered by charity- in particular, poor relief, which they considered to be the province of the Church. The Church, for its part, welcomed the responsibility, and encouraged charity as a means of attaining salvation for its members. Since charity was so bound up with the Church, the religious changes of the Reformation period could not help but have some effect upon it, although it will be shown that in Coventry there was a large degree of continuity in the reasons for giving, and even resistance to denials of the efficacy of 'good works'. The dissolutions had an enormous impact upon poor relief, however, because they destroyed many religious institutions which contributed to it. Whereas the Reformation did not reduce the level of private charitable giving, the dissolutions swept away institutions which were not replaced, and their contributions ceased altogether.

The first evidence for charitable giving in Coventry is derived from the wills of the citizens. A high proportion of bequests made in the wills were of a charitable sort. Most of them concerned distributions of alms in money, food or clothing to the poor at specified times, but often at the testator's funeral. Testators requested numbers of poor in the city to carry tapers and torches about their body on the day of their burial in return for payment, and alms were

frequently provided for all those poor who attended the burial. Alms were also given to be distributed at other times specified by testators, sometimes over a period of time, often years, or at the discretion of their executors and overseers. Testators who provided for masses and prayers for their souls often left instructions that out of the endowment lands or money, a certain sum should be distributed to the poor at a time specified by them, usually on the anniversary of their death. In addition to these bequests there were those to promote education, usually to poor scholars of Oxford and Cambridge, for marriage portions to poor maidens to give them a start in life, for the repair of highways and bridges, and for other public works. Occasionally, a loan fund was established, which was intended to promote employment by providing a capital sum for individuals to expand their businesses, or help those who had just completed their apprenticeships to set up in business on their own.

All these forms of charity were bound up with the Catholic Church's doctrine that 'good works' assisted the passage of the soul through Purgatory to Heaven. They were another means open to people to invest in their salvation. The motivation behind bequests to the poor was to secure a return of prayers from the recipient. Often the beneficiary of the bequest was required to pray for the soul of his or her benefactor, and many bequests included an exhortation 'to pray for me', or 'to pray for my soul', or more simply 'for my soul'. The prayers of the poor were thought to be specially effective, and even when there is no explicit request for a return of prayers, there can be little doubt that a return was hoped for.

In some cases it is difficult to see how a return of prayers might be secured. This has led to the assumption that some bequests

were motivated by reasons other than religion, which have been labelled as secular bequests. It is unlikely that any differentiation existed in the minds of testators, however. In any case a charitable bequest could be religiously motivated even if there was no mention of any religious services, whether masses or prayers.[1] Moreover certain types of charitable bequests are thought to be secular rather than religious in intent often because the minutiae of the bequest are largely ignored. What seems to be a secular bequest on the surface, after closer scrutiny often turns out to have been motivated by the strongest of religious reasons.

To begin with let us look at almshouses, which may appear at first sight to have been motivated by the strongest of secular reasons; to provide accommodation for the aged and infirm poor on an institutional basis, circumstances under which it is perhaps difficult to see how they might have fulfilled a religious function. Behind them, however, was the strongest of religious motivations. They were forms of chantries, in which the poor had been substituted for priests as the prayer-force. Almshouses would be better described as beadhouses, for in fact this was what they were. Both examples founded in Coventry in the early sixteenth century, by Thomas Bond the elder in 1506 and William Ford in 1507, were looked upon as chantries. They fulfilled a dual role, therefore.[2]

The citizens of Coventry also made bequests to St. John's hospital to maintain the hospital's twenty or thirty beds, and to

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1. J.A.F. Thomson 'Piety and Charity in Late Medieval London', JEH, xvi (1965), 180.

2. See above, 74-8.

provide food and money for the poor and the master, priests and sisters who ran it.[3] Those gifts to the poor who used the hospital probably secured a return of prayers for their benefactors in the same way as did bequests to the poor made at other times. Bequests to the priests and sisters of the hospital were undoubtedly intended to secure their prayers, and it must be remembered that the hospital attracted bequests for more formalised intercession: for additional funeral services, for trentals and for anniversary obits to be performed by the religious of the hospital as well.[4] The hospital was never exclusively a secular institution, therefore.

Another type of bequest which appears at first sight to have been secularly motivated was that to promote education. In 1530 Thomas Waren provided for a clerk of the Greyfriars who was a student of either university to receive 6s.8d a year for three years, which was to be paid by the churchwardens of Holy Trinity. At the end of the three years they were to choose another, and so on every three years for ever. Waren was contributing to education, but since the student who was to receive the money was to be a clerk, he could quite easily make a return of prayers. Although Waren did not request him to do this, it is likely that he did.[5] Some individuals used students as chantry priests. Thus Alexander Horseley in 1496 instructed his confessor to find a student who was also a priest at Oxford to pray for him for three years, receiving 40s. for the first two years and 36s.4d. for the third. The primary motive behind this bequest was

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3. See Appendix, Table 57.

4. ibid. Tables 48, 49.

5. PCC, 25 Jankyn.

religious, and Horeseley was clearly investing in his salvation while promoting education at the same time.[6]

Bequests for the upkeep of highways and bridges may not at first seem to be religiously motivated, but sometimes they were considered to be by testators. In 1538 Agnes Ives gave twenty nobles (£6 13s.4d) to be 'bestoyd for ye wellth of my soll' within the space of a year after her death. Half the sum was to be dealt to poor people in the Trinity parish in Coventry in amounts of 6s.8d. on certain specified feast days during the year.[7] The other half was to be bestowed on roads about the city where there was most need.[8] This is the only evidence among the surviving wills of a testator specifically relating a bequest for the upkeep of highways to the good of his or her soul. But this does not mean that everyone else who made bequests for the same purpose did not believe that it was an investment for their salvation.

Lastly, there are those testators who provided sums of money to be employed as loan funds. These bequests were perhaps more secular than religious in motivation, but had religious overtones. In 1518 John Haddon, a wealthy draper and alderman of Coventry, bequeathed £400 for a 'commonwealth', to be distributed in the following manner: £100 was to go towards the reparations of the lands belonging to the guilds of Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi; £100 was to go towards the

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6. PCC, 31 Vox.

7. See below, 340-41.

8. LJRO, Ives, Agnes, 13/10/39. See Thomson, op. cit., 180, who has found similar bequests in the London wills in the late fifteenth century.

reparations of the city wardens lands; £100 was to be given as a capital sum to young men of the Drapers just setting up in business for themselves, to be used to buy broad or narrow cloth or wool; and £100 was to be given to members of other occupations 'which be thryvyng', each to have as much as would buy 'twenty stones' of wool. The recipients (in the cases of the first two sums, the masters of the two guilds and the city wardens) were to have the use of the money free of interest for a year, when it was to be loaned out again the next year. The mayor and the city council were to be responsible for the money, and sureties were to be obtained from those who received it. The clerk of the Trinity Guild was to keep a list of 'all obligacons' concerning the money, in return for which he was to receive 6s.8d. a year. The £400 was to be kept in a chest in St. Mary's Hall divided into four compartments, into each of which £100 was to be placed, and there were to be four keys to the chest. One key each was to be held by the mayor, the master of the Trinity Guild, the 'high master' of the Drapers and, to begin with, Haddon's executors for the time of their lives and then the master of the Corpus Christi Guild. Lands worth 20s. a year were to be set aside in order that each of the key keepers might have 3s.4d a year for their labours.[9]

Now, was this bequest motivated by religious or secular considerations? Since Haddon gave £100 to the masters of Trinity and Corpus Christi Guild to make reparations of their property, it might be argued that the motivation behind this part of the bequest was religious. Haddon was contributing to the perpetuation of the guilds by helping them to maintain their lands. The fundamental purpose of the guilds was to maintain a constant round of prayers and masses for the health

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9. PCC, 17 Ayloffe.

of their members while alive and for their souls when dead. Haddon was undoubtedly a member of the senior fraternity, and so he would benefit from the prayers and masses celebrated by the guild's priests. On the other hand, Haddon may not have been motivated by religious considerations when he made that bequest. The links between the guilds and the corporation have already been discussed, and Haddon may have been motivated by the fact that the guilds and the corporation were inter-dependent. He may have been seeking to aid the corporation- which would make the bequest secular rather than religious. We will never know how Haddon viewed his bequest, but it serves to reaffirm the point that there is no easy distinction to be made between religious and secular bequests.

All the forms of charity so far mentioned, which were directly concerned with the relief of individual poverty, have been criticised as being ineffective. It has been claimed that they were distributed indiscriminately, regardless of the need of the recipients, because their primary motivation was to secure a return of prayers, and even that they encouraged mendicancy. Whether or not such bequests made any contribution to the relief of poverty was entirely secondary.[10] This claim is unfair, and unjustified with regard to Coventry. To claim that the bequests were distributed indiscriminately is to ignore what is, quite simply, an abundance of evidence to the contrary. Coventry testators constantly differentiated between the respectable poor who were considered deserving of poor relief, and the beggarly poor, who were not.

Many testators left precise instructions that their bequests to the poor should go to the 'household' poor and no other. By his will of 1507 Richard Cooke bequeathed twenty marks to be dealt 'amonge pour

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10. W.K. Jordan, Philanthropy in England 1480 - 1660. A Study of the changing pattern of English social aspirations., (1959), 146-47.

people at home at their houses' within six months of his death in money or clothing. In 1510 John Sparrow bequeathed £5 to be dealt to 'poor householders' in amounts of 12d. 'eche house'. In 1513 Roger Chamber gave 40s. to be dealt to poor people 'at their houses the daye of my buriall'. In 1517 William Pysford the elder bequeathed £10 to be distributed to the poor on the day of his burial, and a further £10 to be distributed at his 'months mind', instructing his executors 'specially to loke uppon pour householders as can knoweth have nede and ben ashamed to aske or begge openly'. In 1526 Richard Marler bequeathed £6 13s.4d. to be dealt amongst forty householders in the city 'which be in poverte and goo not a begging', and a similar amount to poor householders 'in the Cuntrie abought the Citie'. A clear indication that testators were aware of the problems of ensuring their bequests went to the deserving poor is reflected in Robert Smyth's bequest in 1512 of 40s. to be dealt to the poor on the day of his burial. He was at pains to emphasise that the money was to go 'to them that have nede and to noo Riche ■ennys servaunts'. Doubtless he knew of instances when alms had been mistakenly given to these people.[11]

Testators not only discriminated between the deserving and undeserving poor, however, but in some cases also between the able and impotent poor. The best examples of this are the almshouses, beadhouses, hospitals, etc., in the city, which catered only for the latter, but sometimes bequests made by testators were specifically for the impotent poor. In 1507 Joan Semans bequeathed five marks 'to be wared in beddinge for bedrede people that is moste nedefull'. In 1518 John Haddon bequeathed a blanket of four yards of 'white freese' each to

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11. PCC, 29 Adeane; 36 Bennett; 3 Fetiplace; 9 Ayloffe; F 20 Porch; 25 Fetiplace.

twenty four 'bedred folks' in Coventry. In 1523 William Cooke bequeathed 3s.4d. to be dealt to 'pour householders and bedred people' on the day of his burial. In 1526 Richard Marler directed that at the time of his obit 6s.8d. was to be given to the poor people 'and specially to those that lye bedred'. Similarly, in 1530 Thomas Waren instructed the churchwardens of Holy Trinity, who were responsible for seeing his obit performed, to distribute an identical sum to the poor that day, 'and in especial to them that lyen bedered'. In 1558 William Hindeman directed his feoffees after his wife's death to distribute the rents of his property 'amongst onest poor housholders that ar in dekay other lame or impotent dwellyng in the saide Cytye' at Christmas and Easter times.[12]

Testators appreciated the needs of the poor. They knew that the winter months were the hardest time of the year and sought to alleviate hardship at this time. In 1507 William Ford bequeathed 6s. a year for the next twenty years to be dealt to the poor in winter time, and one thousand faggots of wood to be distributed to them 'in the moost coldest tyme of the yere' for the same period. In 1517 William Pysford the elder provided that there should be dealt to poor men and women about All Hallows Day 'xxti ffryse gownes and xx Shirts and Smokks' to those in most need, and in winter time 'at sundrye tymes' one thousand faggots for the next ten years. In 1532 John Humphrey instructed his son Richard to distribute one thousand faggots to the poor in winter time for the next seven years. Eight years later, in 1540, Isabell Wade ordered her executors to 'bestowe amonges pore people beynge housholders in the sayde Cyty yerely for the space of xxti yeres nexte after my decease xls. in bread and faggots in Wynter tyme when they shall thynke

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12. PCC, 29 Adeane; 7 Bodfelde; F 20 Porch; 25 Jankyn; LJRO, Hindman, William, 13/11/59.

best And also one dosen of Shetes and one dosen of Smockes yerely during the said xx yeres'.[13]

There are also a number of bequests specifically linked to other times during the year. Some testators left instructions that their bequests were to be distributed on holy days, religious festivals and other days of religious significance, most commonly Fridays. The motivation behind these bequests was probably to secure the prayers of the poor at the most propitious times in the year. Despite this, discriminatory instructions were still applied. In 1509 Richard Lee instructed his son to distribute 6s.8d. in the time of Lent 'to poore bedred people and mosest nedyng' in money and bread out of lands he had left him 'for my soule & all cristen soules'. In 1510 Richard Jackson bequeathed property worth 10s. a year to Holy Trinity so long as he, his wife and their children and his kin might be remembered every Sunday in the bead roll. Of the 10s. rent 12d. was to be dealt to the poor on Good Friday. In 1511 Edmund Hadley bequeathed 8d a week for a year to be distributed to the poor on Fridays 'in the worship of Crist Our saviour and his xii apostells', and 4d. to be distributed on Fridays each week for four years. In 1513 Roger Chamber left 40s. to be distributed to the poor in bread from the door of his house every Friday over the year for the space of ten years. Joan Marler left 15s. to be distributed at Christmas and another 15s. at Easter ' to xv poore householders' in 1530. One of the most elaborate of these sorts of bequests was that made by Agnes Ives in 1538. In addition to £3 6s.8d. given to repair of highways, a further similar sum was to be distributed in amounts of 6s.8d. on the following days: the Eve of the Assumption of Our Lady, the Eve of the Nativity of Our Lady,

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13. PCC, 35 Adeane; 9 Ayloffe; 15 Thower; 27 Alenger.

Michaelmas Eve, All Hallows Eve, Christmas Eve, Candlemas Eve, Ash Wednesday, Passion Sunday, Good Friday and Whitsun Eve for the health of her soul. In 1543 Robert Kirvyn provided for 12d. to be dealt to the poor on Good Friday for an unspecified number of years 'to praye for me and my frendes'. The same year Richard Brecknock gave a stock of money worth £4 to the churchwardens of Holy Trinity, providing that the churchwardens distributed 13d to thirteen poor men on Good Friday 'in the honor of crist and his apostylls yt my sole may be prayde for'. In 1544 Roger Palmer instructed his executors to see that four poor men should each be given a shirt and three poor women a smock each worth 12d. on Good Friday for the space of seven years. In 1556 Ellen Somerfield provided for 5s. to be dealt to the poor every Good Friday for ever. In 1558 William Hindman bequeathed the residue of rents from property after an obit and repairs had been paid for to poor householders 'that ar in dekay other lame or impotent dwellyng in the saide Cytye' at Christmas and Easter.[14]

Occasionally a special charitable bequest is made in response to a certain need identified by the testator. In 1493 Thomas Brademeadowe recognised that taxation hit the poor the hardest of all people, and so gave lands to the wardens of Our Lady's chapel in St. Michael's to maintain certain lights for ever in the church, adding that , 'When A xv peny or other charge heraftr shall hope to be rered levyed & gadered herafter in Coventr by the x warders ther then I wyll that these Wardeyns & ther successors shall paye in every of the seid x wards 3s.4d. for the porest that then shalbe cessed for the payment of the seid xv peny or other charges' out of the rents of the lands.[15]

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14. PCC, 27 Bennett; 31 Bennett; 7 Fetiplace; 31 Fetiplace; 2 Thower; LJRO, Ives, Agnes, 13/10/39; PCC, 9 Pynyng; LJRO, Brecknock, Richard, 16/10/43; Palmer, Roger, 12/2/44; Somerfield, Ellen, 10/9/56; Hindman, William, 13/11/59.
15. PCC, 8 Vox.

This was probably also aimed at poor householders who would be those liable to tax.

Testators went much further than discriminating between the deserving and undeserving poor, however, and sought to foster and encourage the latter to work rather than live off other people's generosity. There a number of bequests of money to buy spinning wheels and carding combs for poor women, and plough shares, coulters and oxen for poor husbandmen in the surrounding countryside. Thomas Bond the elder bequeathed an ox each to twenty poor husbandmen in Warwickshire, a pair of carding combs to each of one hundred poor women 'to carde their wolle', and a spinning wheel each for as many more 'to spyn'. The following year William Ford gave a pair of carding combs each to twenty poor women, and spinning wheels to thirty more. In 1513 Roger Chamber bequeathed a mark each to twenty poor husbandmen 'that have plowys and lack oxen'. Such bequests were not confined to Coventry and its environs, however, but were made by some citizens to other parts of the country. In 1516 John Padlond provided for five dozen plough shares and coulters to be given to the parish of Pontesbury near Shrewsbury, as well as the same number of each to the area about the city. It seems that Padlond was born in this area, since he also made a bequest to the Greyfriars of Shrewsbury. In 1518 John Haddon gave £20 to buy oxen or kine for poor husbandmen about the city, and £10 to buy carding combs and spinning wheels. In 1526 Richard Marler provided for the distribution of fifty spinning wheels and fifty pairs of carding combs to poor householders in Coventry, as well as fifty plough shares and fifty coulters to poor husbandmen in the area.[16]

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16. PCC, 22 Adeane; 24 Adeane; 31 Fetiplace; 15 Holder; 17 Ayloffe; F 20 Porch.

All the foregoing attests to the fact that poor relief was not distributed indiscriminately, but with care to ensure that it went to those who were most deserving. Even when testators did not leave explicit instructions for the distribution of their bequests and left it to the discretion of their executors, there is no reason to suppose that they should have been any the less discriminating. This is not to say that bequests were never wasted by incompetent executors, or that executors never distributed them on a first-come-first-served basis in order to be rid of the responsibility, but this was almost certainly not common practice. It did not matter whether it was executors, churchwardens, guild wardens or crafts wardens who distributed bequests, they would all have exercised discrimination in doing so. All would have been familiar with the local scroungers, who would have been turned away, as well as knowing who was in real need of relief. There was one problem in distributing alms from a central point, however, such as at funerals, namely, that some in need would not beg openly. Some testators sought to solve this problem by directing that their bequests should be distributed to the houses of the poor, and, indeed, whether or not it was for this reason, as the period progressed more and more testators instructed that their bequests were to be distributed thus. This not only meant that those who would not beg received much needed relief, but the chances of it going to beggars and vagabonds were slight.[17] Though poor relief in the sixteenth century is often labelled 'casual' or 'indiscriminate', terms which suggest incompetence and ineffectiveness when compared to the so-called 'organised' and 'centralised' systems, it does seem to

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17. See below, 367-68.

have met the needs of the time. Testators took considerable care to make sure that the right people benefitted from their generosity, and, though motivated by religious considerations, bequests were no less effective in relieving poverty.

The same care and attention was taken by testators when they made other charitable bequests. For example, there were several types of bequests designed to give young people a start in life. Bequests of marriage portions for the daughters of the respectable poor were popular with Coventry testators, who were especially generous in this respect. In 1518 John Haddon gave £60 to be distributed in household goods where there was need. A number of testators gave £20, including John Dwale (a merchant, warden in 1490, sheriff in 1494 and thereafter a member of the city council) William Ford and Isabel Wade. The same discrimination was exercised in distributing these bequests as any others to ensure that only the deserving poor received them. In 1507 Joan Semans bequeathed £5 in household stuff for poor maidens 'that have pour frends and noon other', and 'to noon but theym that be of goode name and fame'. In 1550 Simon Parker bequeathed 10s. each to twenty young married couples 'that be towardly & thryvyng dwellyng within the sayd Cyttye of Coventre maryeng & abydyng ther'. In 1552 Cuthbert Joynour gave £20 to be distributed to poor maidens upon their marriages in amounts of 6s.8d, but only to those 'whyche be of honeste reporte'.[18]

Bequests to education were another form of charitable giving which provided a start in life for the recipients. Unfortunately,

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18. PCC, 17 Ayloffe; 2 Moone; 35 Adeane; 27 Alenger; 29 Adeane; LJRO, Parker, Simon, 13/4/51; PCC, 23 Wrastley.

this constructive form of charity received little support from Coventry testators. Moreover, general bequests are few. Most were to specified individuals who were either related, mainly sons, or to those personally known to the testator. John Sparrow gave 40s. 'to John Copland my scoler' in 1510, Thomas Churchman gave a similar sum 'to Thomas my scoler of Cambridge', in 1512, John Haddon gave 40s. a year up to £10 to his son-in-law 'Maister Fowler' for his exhibition and a similar amount to John-A-Wood his wife's son at Oxford, in 1518, Nicholas Burwey gave 6s.8d. every quarter for two years to Walter Browne, priest, towards his exhibition at Oxford in 1519, Richard Marler bequeathed 26s.8d a year for four years to his scholar Richard Solson in 1526, John Bond gave £10 to his son Thomas 'to fynde hym to lawe' in 1538 and Roger Palmer bequeathed £20 to his son Julinus 'for his exhibicion at Scole ' in 1544. There are only two general bequests of any note. In 1517 William Pysford the elder gave £20 to poor scholars of Oxford and Cambridge towards their exhibitions 'as can be thought most sadde and vertuous'. In 1519 Nicholas Burwey provided for 40s. to be given each year to a poor scholar of Oxford towards his exhibition out of the rents from certain lands. The sum was to be paid for twelve years, which was the length of the lease Burwey held on the property.[19]

A few testators established loan funds, intended to do one of two things: to provide young craftsmen just setting up in business with a capital sum of money to buy stock, or to enable established craftsmen to expand their existing business. No apprenticeship funds were set up by Coventry testators, but perhaps this is to be expected.

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19. PCC, 36 Bennett; 17 Ayloffe; 27 Ayloffe; F 20 Porch; F 19 Pynyng; LJRO, Palmer, Roger, 12/2/44; PCC, 9 Ayloffe; 27 Ayloffe.

The underlying motivation behind the loan funds was to stimulate employment in the city, and newly established businesses and expanding ones were more likely to do this than apprenticeship funds. Loan funds, therefore, were intended to provide craftsmen with the means of buying stock, and thus set more people to work.

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Before looking at the loan funds themselves, we will look at the problem of unemployment in Coventry during the period 1485 to 1558, as reflected in the attempts of the corporation to solve it through various local ordinances. The early ordinances make no reference to the unemployed, however, but seem to concern themselves only with vagabonds and beggars in the city. In 1490 the mayor and aldermen received a royal letter instructing them to proceed against all 'theves, riotters, vacabundes and suspect persones' in the city and elsewhere in their jurisdiction. The letter went on to say that 'many like persones mysruled, in especiall haserders, dicers & Carders ben eftesones drawyng vnto diuers places within our Towne there, and within the same by diuers folkes ar recetted, couerted & socored to the subuercion of goode rule & disturbance of our true liegemen there'. The mayor and aldermen were charged to carry out a search for such persons on 18 January after 10 pm., commit those to ward which were suspected of such 'crymes' and punish those who were subsequently found guilty of them. The problem was not so easily solved, however, and five years later, in 1495, the corporation returned to the problem. Then it was stated that vagabonds and beggars had become 'mighty in body' in the city and its suburbs, and to reduce their large numbers it was ordered that all vagabonds and beggars were to leave the city within three days of a proclamation to this effect being made. Any who remained were to be imprisoned as

before, and if any harboured them they were to be fined 20s. for every default.[20]

Further ordinances did not follow until the late 1510s. In 1517 the corporation adopted the extreme measure of ordering all vagabonds and beggars, as well as those it classed as 'lusty beggars', to leave the city within a night and a day of a proclamation being made.[21] This new class of beggars is variously referred to in contemporary sources as 'lusty beggars', 'mighty beggars' and 'sturdy beggars', which term illustrates well contemporary attitudes to the unemployed. Late medieval society did not recognise that anybody could be out of work through no fault of their own, and the unemployed were lumped together with vagabonds and beggars and those idle good-for-nothings who would not work for their living. Since vagabonds and beggars were considered to be among the unlawful elements in the community, by association so were the unemployed. Measures to resolve the problem were punitive, therefore, intended to punish rather than assist the unemployed to find work. But, the corporation's ordinances also show a growing awareness that people could be out of work through no fault of their own, which led ultimately to attempts to create opportunities for work.

In 1518 a series of ordinances were passed for the 'True Making of Cloth' intended to improve the quality of cloth manufactured in the city, whose falling standards were held responsible for the decline in the city's main industry. After outlining punishments for those who made poor-quality cloth, it was stated that those 'bygge beggars, that wil-not worke well to get ther levyng, but lye in the feldes & breke hedges & stele mennys fruyte in somour', were to be banished

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20. LB, 538 - 39, 568.

21. ibid., 652.

from the city or punished 'without favour'. Any situation which looked as if it might generate troublesome behaviour was to be quickly brought under control. Bowling at St. Anne's Chapel by the Charterhouse was forbidden between 6 am and 6 pm, unless those playing 'be honest persones that will make litell noyse'. In any case, 'pore Craftes-men' were not to be permitted to play at any time 'levyng ther busynes at home that they shuld lyve by'. Evidently the numbers playing bowls had increased, probably as a result of increasing unemployment, and the city council was anxious that it should not bring together disaffected elements in the population.[22]

The punitive action taken against able-bodied beggars and vagabonds about this time was matched by some consideration for those unable to work through some disability. In 1521 the aldermen in each ward were instructed to search out 'Impotent and nedy beggars', who were to be allowed to beg in the city after obtaining a licence to do so. They were to have a badge on their bags 'of the signe of the Olyfaunt'. All those subsequently found in the city without such a device on their bags were to be removed without the city walls within a night and a day. This licensing of beggars was a method of control employed in other cities. Gloucester is thought to have adopted licensing as early as 1504, with York in 1515 and London in or about 1517. Local legislation in respect of licensing beggars preceded the national, for it was not until 1531 that such licensing was made compulsory. It was seen as a means of controlling numbers, but its effectiveness is questionable. The numbers in Coventry continued to rise, and created something of a nuisance in the city. In 1524 it was ordered that 'no beggar of this Citie fromehensfurthe shall begge within the

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22. ibid., 658, 661.

two parishe Churches of this Citie in the tyme of Goddes seruice vsed ther, vpon peyn to be punysshed by imprisonment of the stokkes by the space of a day & a nyght'.[23]

For the time being no further poor-law legislation was passed by the city council. By the early 1530s, however, it was forced by circumstances to return to the problem. The Act of 1531 admitted in its preamble that 'vagabonds and beggars have of long time increased and daily do increase in great and excessive numbers, by the occasion of idleness, mother and root of all vices, whereby hath insurged and sprung and daily insurgeth and springeth continual thefts, murders and heinous offences and great enormities'. Again, the beggars were labelled as unsocial elements, and the act may have been prompted partly with a view to exacting some form of social control. However, it is significant that the increase in the numbers of beggars and vagabonds was thought to be due to idleness, which suggests their numbers had been swelled by the unemployed, or the 'sturdy' beggars. The year after this act was passed Humphrey Reynolds submitted his supplication to the king, in which he remarked upon the effect which the decline in Coventry's cloth industry had had on unemployment, and the threat to law and order which it posed. The same year the council was faced by a petition from the constables, who wished to be discharged from their responsibilities of the Common Watch in order to give more time 'to avoyed out of the Citie all such vacabundes & myghtye beggars as herafter shall resort & come into the Citie'. The petition was granted, but such a step indicates the scale of the problem faced by the civic authorities in Coventry in the early 1530s.[24]

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23. ibid., 677; Joyce Youngs, Sixteenth Century England, (1984), 261; LB, 687.

24. LB, 712.

It was another ten years or so before it was finally recognised by the council that people could be out of work through no fault of their own. In the first half of the 1540s a scheme was drawn up suggesting a series of measures 'first for the increase & avauncement of gods honor And secundarilie for the wealthe of this our natural Citie'. The former have been discussed elsewhere.[25] Certain of the common lands belonging to the city were to be enclosed and leased out for periods up to three years, the revenues from which were to be used to buy stocks of corn and wool, to repair the Whitefriars church and to see that 'in tyme of nede the Impotent & lame people & poore craftesmen may be releived & holpen & thable & lustye people Kept in worke'. Then those vagabonds and beggars who would not work were dealt with. The aldermen were to examine the poor in their wards, and any who had not lived in the city for at least three years were to leave. Those allowed to stay were to be compelled to work, 'if any work be had for them', but if they refused work when it was found for them they were similarly to leave the city. The scheme does not appear to have been adopted, but it does show that the unemployed were now recognised as being distinct from vagabonds and beggars.

In 1547 further steps were taken to cope with the rising unemployment and the increasing numbers of poor. The council ordered that a census should be taken 'To thentente it mays be knowen whethers there be moo people in this Citye of the pooreste sorte that muste be sette on werke then othere that be able to sette theym on worke'. The census, taken by the aldermen in each ward, was to include the names of possible employers with a view to placing more workers with

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25. See below, 449-51.

26. SBT/GHC, DR/10 1858.

those whom it was decided could find work for them. Those employers who held money from one of the loan funds were to set three poor men each to work if they could. As far as the unemployed were concerned, those who refused to work when a vacancy was found were to be re-assigned elsewhere in the first instance, and if they persisted in their refusal to work they were to be banished from the city. Those set on work were to be paid in wages, and any employer found paying for work in kind was to be fined 6s.8d. for every default and imprisoned for refusal to pay the fine until he did so. Those who were unable to work through no fault of their own were to be supported by alms from the common chest. It was ordered that 'if any person eythere for age, infirmytie or multitude of children be not able by his labour to gette to susteyne his famylye that then the aldermen se hym releved by the Comon almes of the Cytye out of the Comon Chieste'. The council also recognised that the situation was constantly changing, and it allowed for alterations and additions to be made to these measures. The aldermen in each ward were to see that the ordinances were kept, and once a month they were to be reviewed by the council and any necessary changes made. By these ordinances the council finally recognised the problem the city faced, and that it was probably going to get worse before it got better. The willingness to respond to the changes in the situation as and when they occurred marks a considerable advance on the previous hard-and-fast legislation.[27]

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The first mention of a loan fund appears in the 1518 order for the 'True Making of Cloth'. One of its articles referred to an unnamed man 'nyghe vnto this Cite', who would give to poor cloth makers

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27. LB., 783 - 85.

in Coventry 'the next Shear tyme' two hundred stones of wool, all costs paid, and £20 in ready money, 'bycouse the spynners & the weuers schall haue redy money for their true labour, & to gyve theym as they may lyue'. The wool and the money were to be delivered to ten men, who were to repay their benefactor over the following year, in order that the fund might be operated the next year. If a person could could not sell his cloth, then it would be taken instead of repayment. The benefactor may have been John Haddon, who could have been operating his fund as a private concern before establishing it on a more formal basis in his will, but there is no evidence to support this. Haddon's loan fund has already been discussed in some detail. The same order went on to remark that it was hoped that some other good men will do the same 'so that the Cite schal-be better occupied by the love of Jhesus, Amen'. It is possible that it was in response to this plea that in 1519 John Hardwen, a draper, who had been mayor in 1513, gave £25 13s.4d. to St. Mary's Hall to be loaned out to 'tenne honeste persones that make cloth' for periods up to three years at the discretion of the mayor and aldermen. Sufficient sureties had to be provided by those who received the money.[28]

Haddon's and Hardwen's loans were not enough, however, and so on 25 February 1523 at a weekly Wednesday meeting of the mayor and his closest advisors it was agreed that they should contribute to a loan fund themselves. Ralph Swillington, the recorder, gave £40, Thomas White, Master of Trinity Guild, gave 40mks. Richard Marler gave £40 and Julian Nethermyll gave £20. The £113 6s.8d collected was 'to go to a common wealth for making of cloth'. Others appreciated the problems faced by the City, if they could not afford to do anything about it. One such individual was William Cooke, who

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28. ibid., 658; PCC, 27 Ayloffe.

made his will in this same year. He attached a remainder clause to a bequest of £100 to his daughter which she was to receive when she reached the age of seventeen. If she died before this age, Cooke directed that the money was to be delivered to St. Mary's Hall and then to the clothiers of the city, 'to thentent that they may gett the more pour people a warke'. Cooke's will is dated 27 March 1523, and the remainder clause may have been prompted by the establishment of the 'commonwealth' fund only a month previously.[29]

The early 1550s saw the citizens of Coventry once again responding to the need to help the unemployed. These later funds were different from the earlier ones, however, in that they did not confine themselves to the textile industry of Coventry, but were made available to all occupations of the city. In 1550 Simon Parker gave £40 to be distributed to six young men of Coventry in free loan 'that be towardly lyk to thryve', for such time as the mayor and aldermen thought fit. The following year the city benefited from another loan fund set up by Thomas White of Bristol, late of Coventry, who had been mayor in 1522. White had died in 1542, and by his will he had given £200 for a loan fund intended to serve a number of purposes, and a number of towns. In 1551 indentures were drawn up between the mayors of Bristol and Coventry to transfer the money to the latter. The former appears to have enjoyed the money until this time, a not uncommon practice. Some loans were intended to serve a number of towns and cities in rotation. Of the total amount £20 was to be given to the mayor of Coventry on Candlemas Day each year when he was sworn in towards furnishing his house and other charges of his year, £20 was to go to the two sheriffs towards the charges of their office each year, £20

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29. BL, Harleian MS 7571, f31; PCC, 7 Bodfelde.

to two aldermen chosen by the mayor for three years and the remaining £140 was to be given to ten honest citizens for the space of three years as a free loan. Some testators at this time sought to help their own workers. In 1551 John Chambers, a capper, directed his executors to give 20d. each 'unto my poore spyners & knytters and to suche as they shall knowe to be neady in deade and willing to work if they were able'. The following year Cuthbert Joynour made the following bequests to those employed by him: 'to every woman that hathe spennyd for me one payre of cardes or ells a whele so farre as fourtie shillings will go' and 'to every Sherman whiche have dressid my clothes at my dycease the some of 6s.8d a pece. I will that John Wylboxe be one of theym'.[30]

Bequests to public works were popular among Coventry testators, in particular those for the repair of highways and bridges about the city and in some cases further afield. Such bequests often represented a considerable, even the largest, part of a testator's total charitable bequests. For example, in 1507 William Ford gave £100 to repair highways about Coventry, as well as the yearly rents from lands in Packington. He also gave 10mks. to repair the bridge of Rochester in Kent, and £20 'to the reparacon of the church and of the place of Sulby'. In 1517 William Pysford the elder bequeathed £50 to repair the highways about Coventry. These were the most generous bequests made by Coventry testators, but several made bequests of £20 and upwards. In 1493 Thomas Brademeadow bequeathed £10 towards the repair of highways

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30. LJRO, Parker, Simon, 13/4/51; An Account of the Many and Great Loans, Benefactions, and Charities Belonging to the City of Coventry, anon., (Coventry, 1733), 5 - 6; LJRO, Chambers, John, 21/9/51; PCC, 23 Wrastley.

between Coventry and Allesley, 30s. to those between Allesley and Meriden, half the money from his debtors in Shrewsbury and all the money owed to him by a certain individual named Tilley of the same place to repair Bilstone bridge, 5s. to repair Canley Lane, 40d. to repair the roads between Coventry and Kenilworth, 6s.8d. to repair Stoneleigh church and bridge, 33s.4d to repair Herningham bridge and a further identical sum to repair Longford bridge, 13s.4d. to repair the Fosse bridge and 6s. to repair Binley bridge. In addition to these specific bequests Brademeadow gave a quarter of his goods not bequeathed to go towards the repair of the highways 'towards Sutton'. The total of his specified bequests was £18 1s., but to this must be added a further considerable sum from unspecified bequests. In 1499 John Dwale, a merchant, warden in 1490, sheriff in 1494 and thereafter a member of the city council until his death, bequeathed £20 to the repair of highways about Coventry. In 1512 Thomas Churchman, a grocer, warden in 1475, sheriff in 1485 and mayor in 1493, bequeathed 6s.8d. to Lillington parish 'when they do cary for the bridge of Chesford', and a further £20 towards the making of the bridge. He also gave 20s. to the making of Bubenhall bridge. John Haddon gave £20 to the repair of Highways about Coventry in 1518. Isabel Wade also gave £20 to the repair of highways about the city.[31]

Testators were undoubtedly responding to a need for something to be done about the highways and bridges. It is likely that some of the specific bequests were made as a result of the testators travelling certain stretches of roads and over certain bridges and finding them wanting in maintenance. Churchman's bequests to Chesford Bridge, just outside Kenilworth on the way to Leamington, seems to

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31. PCC, 35 Adeane; 9 Ayloffe; 8 Vox; 2 Moone; 15 Fetiplace; 17 Ayloffe; 27 Alenger.

have been prompted by an awareness that some work was about to be done on it. Not that such awareness was confined to Warwickshire, for Ford's bequest towards the repair of Rochester bridge was almost certainly prompted by the knowledge that work was taking place there at the time of his bequest. A number of London testators also made bequests towards work being done on it.[32]

Despite the many and generous bequests of testators like those of Coventry, the roads and bridges (especially the latter) had fallen into a bad state of repair by the beginning of Edwards VI's reign. The Parliament of 2 and 3 Edward VI ordered that fee farms of corporate towns for three years from 14 March 1548 should not be paid to the king but used for the repairing of walls, bridges, 'settyng pore peiple on worke' and other good deeds in the towns from which they were due. Coventry testators do not seem to have responded to this government initiative, and bequests for the repair of roads and bridges show no marked increase after this time.[33]

Other forms of constructive bequests included those to repair damage to the city's water supply. It seems that in the early sixteenth century the city was intending to carry out what must have been extensive work on one of the water conduits, but as yet could not afford to do so. Those bequests which were made, were made in anticipation of the work. The first was made by William Ford, who gave £40 towards the making of the new conduit 'whan it is newe made'. Other bequests followed, such as the £10 given by Richard Cooke the same year, the 5 mks. given by Richard Jackson in 1510, a house in Jordan Well worth

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32. Thomson, op.cit., 186.

33. CPR Edward VI. VI, 423; See Appendix, Table 59.

26s.8d. a year given by John Haddon in 1518 and 10s. by Nicholas Burwey in the following years, specifically 'to make a grate their'. It is not known when the conduit was finally made, however. Another bequest to the city's water supply was made by John Padlond in 1516. He bequeathed a house in Little Park Street to Bailly Lane ward 'towarde the reparacon of the well and other chargis that hereafter shall fall to the saide warde'.[34]

A similar situation existed with regard to a series of bequests towards the building of a new cross in Cross Cheaping. Thomas Bond the elder bequeathed £6 8s.4d. towards the making of a new cross in 1506. William Ford bequeathed 5 mks. towards the same the following year. Richard Jackson left £20 towards the making of the cross, adding 'if any be made'. The old cross was taken down in 1512. This year Thomas Churchman gave £3 6s.8d. towards the new one. In 1518 John Haddon gave a further £20, followed in 1519 by Nicholas Burwey, who gave 20s. The new cross was eventually built in the early 1540s. Indentures were entered into in 1541 by Cuthbert Joynour then mayor, certain aldermen and citizens of Coventry, Thomas Philips, free mason, John Pettit of Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, to build a cross in Cross Cheaping to a height of forty feet before the feast of St. Michael (29 September) for the price of £187 6s.8d.[35]

Lastly, testators gave assistance to the corporation. During the sixteenth century the corporation operated under very severe

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34. PCC, 35 Adeane; 29 Adeane; 31 Bennett; 27 Ayloffe, 15 Holder.

35. PCC, 22 Adeane; 31 Bennett; City Annals, F. Bliss Burbidge, Old Coventry and Lady Godiva: Being Some Flowers of Coventry History. (Birmingham, n.d.), 225; PCC, 15 Fetiplace; 17 Ayloffe; 27 Ayloffe; W. Dugdale, The Antiquities of Warwickshire. (1656), 145-46.

financial constraints. Assertions of poverty by corporations in this century are usually treated with suspicion, since they are accompanied with requests for financial relief, more often than not a reduction in their fee-farm. It is accepted, however, that these pleas of poverty were not always groundless. At Coventry the lack of finances prompted the establishment of a reserve fund, which would meet extraordinary charges upon the city when they arose. In 1501 William Pysford the elder, then mayor, 'be the advyce of the Counceill ordred a Comien box to be had in this Cite, which he ordeyned of his cost, & let set hit in the Counceill house in seynt Mary hall'. Control of the fund was to some extent vested in the commonalty, for of the five keys to the box, one was in the hands of the mayor and the remaining four in the hands of individuals who were selected, with the approval of the mayor, by ten aldermen.[36]

The monies which went into the box were drawn from certain fines imposed upon offenders who broke local bye-laws and the rents of common lands enclosed and kept in severalty. This was the main income of the box, but contributions from testators were quite common, especially in the first twenty years or so of the box's existence. Thomas Bond the elder gave 20s. in 1506, William Ford 5 mks. the following year, Thomas Churchman £3 6s.8d. in 1512, John Barnabe 10s. and John Haddon a close at Hill Cross worth 16s. a year and another beside St. Nicholas' worth 26s.8d. a year in 1518, and Richard Burwey 20s. in 1519. William Pysford the elder made a bequest to the box of course, giving £3 6s. 8d. in 1517 'to be applyed for the Comen Welth and for the Comen when nede shall require and noon otherwise to be used'. Only one bequest was made outside this period, when

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36. LB., 600.

Roger Palmer bequeathed £3 6s.8d. in 1544.[37]

There are no records of what the money from the Common Box was actually used for. Pysford's bequest sums up the purpose of the fund, and with this definition in mind some likely uses can be suggested. For example, it is probable that it was money from the Common Box which purchased almost one hundred quarters of grain just before Christmas 1520 after the dearth census of the previous October, in order to keep the Bakers of the city working and supply the city with bread. In 1549 the corporation took it upon itself to purchase unsold cloth from the clothiers of the city. From this year those clothiers who could not dispose of their cloth 'in convenyent tyme' could take it to St. Mary's Hall on Wednesdays before noon and there 'haue redy money for the same by prouysion of the Citie, so that the same Clothes be trulie wrought & maid'. It is likely that the money to do this was taken from the Common Box.[38]

There was almost a complete lack of communal provision for many of the things discussed so far, all of which were entrusted to the hands of the private individual. The corporation might be called upon to administer a particular endowment for this or that purpose, but it rarely provided for it itself. However, the corporation at Coventry, like other large towns and cities, did provide free subsidised grain in times of dearth. During several years of bad

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37. For examples of fines see LB, 609, 622, 623, 630, 631, 632, passim; and for examples of enclosures, see ibid., 734, 763; PCC, 22 Adeane; 35 Adeane; 15 Fetiplace; F 16 Ayloffe; 9 Ayloffe; F 28 Bodfelde; 22 Ayloffe; LJRO, Palmer, 12/2/44.

38. LB., 675, 791 - 92.

harvests in the late 1510s and early 1520s the corporation took a number of steps to ensure the city had sufficient grain and bread. In 1519 it intervened in the corn market in favour of the city and its inhabitants. Following a dearth census conducted in October 1520 the city itself purchased a large amount of grain. Two years later, in order to ensure future stocks of corn, the corporation ordered that tenants of the city's enclosed common lands 'schal yerly plowe & sowe all or halfe the same Growndes or ells to fforfet ther takes [holdings] & leses'. There was a further series of bad harvests in the 1540s, and the corporation again stepped in to ensure the city's grain supply. About 1544 certain of the common lands were again enclosed and the rents used amongst other things to buy corn, while areas of Cheylsmoe Park were also enclosed and sown with corn which was to be sold in the market 'to the comens & poore of this Citie & to noon other' at 4d. below the market price.[39]

At least one testator sought to provide the corporation with additional funds. In 1518 John Haddon gave £20 'to lye in A Stokk within seint Mary Hall to buy corne with at such tyme that corne Roseth to bryng the markett downe as farr as this said some of £20 will extende'. Haddon's bequest was timely, for the first of the poor harvests in the earlier period has been identified as that of 1518. He was almost certainly responding to the likelihood of a poor harvest that year (he made his will in March).[40] Haddon's is the only one of its kind, however. No similar bequests have been found among the surviving wills in the later period of bad harvests.

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39. LB., 666, 675, 679 - 80; SBT/GHC, DR 10/1858

40. PCC, 17 Ayloffe.

Testators responded with their bequests directly to the needs of the community in times of hardship. Looking at the overall pattern of charitable bequests it is clear that they concentrate into roughly two periods: from the early 1490s to the late 1510s, and from the late 1520s to the early 1550s, both of which periods coincide with times of economic recession in Coventry.[41] In addition to these precise bequests, testators of both these periods also gave the residue of estates to be disposed of in charitable gifts in the form of alms to the poor, 'deeds of mercy' (which were probably the same thing) or 'deeds of charity' (which must have included the whole range of such bequests). These could be considerable sums in some cases.[42] Examples of this sort of bequest have not been found outside either period. In both periods are also found examples of remainder clauses attached to bequests to children. Five individuals attached such a clause in the first period and six in the second.

The bequests to which the clauses were attached were often substantial. In 1498 John Mathew bequeathed his property to his son who was then under age. If he failed to reach his majority Mathew instructed that his lands were to be divided 'so that ther may be hosys provided that vi pour men may have placs to dwell in duryng ther liffes And after ther deceases other vi to have the said howsyng and soo to contynue to be Keped duryng for ever And every of them to have wekely 8d. in money and so to contynewe for ever to pray for my fader my moder and my wiffe'. In 1500 William Hopkins

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41. See Appendix, Tables 51 - 58.

42. Jordan, op.cit., 33, finds bequests of this nature 'uncommon', but the Coventry evidence and that found by Thomson, op.cit., 180, for London finds the opposite.

bequeathed a house in Spon Street to his wife. After her death it was to pass to his son or his heirs lawfully begotten. Failing this it was to go to his daughters and their heirs. If all died and there were no heirs then the house was to be sold and the money distributed in deeds of charity: half to poor householders in Coventry and half to repair the roads about the city. In 1510 Richard Jackson bequeathed £20 to his son's daughter who was under age, with the proviso that, if she died before coming of age the money was to be given to poor people and to repair the roads. In 1517 William Pysford the elder made extensive bequests to his children: £200 to his son William 'in money merchandise ware plate and good detts', 200 mks. (£133 6s.8d.) to his other son Henry in the same way, 200 mks. to his daughter Joan 'in money and plate', £100 to his wife's daughter Agnes in the same way and £100 each to his two daughters Margery and Elizabeth in the same way. If any died before reaching lawful age, twenty one for the sons and seventeen for the daughters, their portions were to be equally divided between the rest, and if all died before inheriting their portions Pysford instructed that 'It be bestowed upon dedes of charitie by the discrecion of myn overseers as beyng ornaments to saints mighells Church mendinge highweys fynding scolars to scole at the universities geving wode and Cloth to pour people in the colde tyme of the yere and som to the Comen box and in other like dedis of charitie'. The last example is that of William Cooke in 1523, which has already been mentioned.[43]

Testators in the later period attached similar clauses, but the original bequests were not so large. In 1538 William Parker bequeathed

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43. PCC, 28 Horne; 23 Moore; 31 Bennett; 9 Ayloffe; See above, 353.

5 mks. each to his son and daughter, who were to inherit the money upon coming of age. If either died their portion was to go to the other, and if both died the 10 mks. was to be distributed 'in deeds of mercy for my Sole yer Solls & All crysteyn Solls'. In 1544 Alice Green bequeathed 40s. to her godson, but if he died under age the money was to be used for two trentals for Alice's soul and the rest for the poor. The same year Robert Smyth bequeathed to his daughter 'the lead that stands before the kechyn dore', but if she died unmarried before reaching twenty-one the lead was to be sold and the money given to poor folk for Smyth's soul and the soul of his wife. Also this year Richard Townshend bequeathed his property to his son and his heirs lawfully begotten. If they died before coming of age the property was to pass to his daughter, and if she died the property was to be sold and the money distributed to poor people and poor maidens when they married. In 1546 Thomas Bowker gave all his goods to his children 'to kepe them and to bryng them uppe', but if they died before reaching their majorities all was to be sold and bestowed 'for my soles helthe in almes and other wys'. In 1548 Thomas Clerk bequeathed £20 and some household goods to his son and £10 plus household goods to each of his three daughters. If any died before coming of age their portions were to be divided between the rest, and if all died their portions were to be bestowed in works of mercy. The following year John West bequeathed £8 to his daughter, but if she died before reaching her majority it was to be 'bestod to the pore acording to godes well'. In 1553 John Wall bequeathed his property to his daughter. If she died without heirs it was to be sold and distributed to the poor where there was most need 'for my soull & all Christen Soulles'.[44]

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44. LJRO, Parker William, 17/7/38; Palmer, Roger, 12/2/44; Smyth, Robert, 23/3/44; Townshend, Richard, 12/2/44; Bowker, Thomas, 27/4/47; PCC, F 2 Cooke; LJRO, West, John, 14/10/49; Wall John, 12/10/51.

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44. LJRO, Parker William, 17/7/38; Palmer, Roger, 12/2/44; Smyth, Robert, 23/3/44; Townshend, Richard, 12/2/44; Bowker, Thomas, 27/4/47; PCC, F 2 Cooke; LJRO, West, John, 14/10/49; Wall John, 12/10/51.

Though testators responded to a need when they made their charitable bequests, there are fluctuations in the patterns of bequests, which require explanation. For example, interest in founding almshouses seems to have confined itself to the period about the turn of the sixteenth century. Bond's (1506) and Ford's (1507) almshouses were the only foundations of this kind established in the period 1485 to 1558. There was one other substantial long-term bequest, also by Ford, of six houses outside Spon Gate for the poor. One other testator, John Mathew in 1498, seems to have been thinking along the same lines as Ford, but his bequest of six houses for the poor was attached as a remainder clause to a bequest to his son. No other testators undertook this form of poor relief, unless we include William Pysford the elder, who increased the capacity of Ford's almshouse by his will of 1517. Interest in this type of poor relief in Coventry conforms to what is known of the national picture. Bequests for almshouses show a steady increase from the beginning of the Tudor period to about 1501, from which time there was a noticeable rise in bequests until just after 1510, after which came a decline to the pre-1501 level by about 1520. From the early 1530s bequests begin to rise once again, but there are no further foundations in Coventry.[45]

Bequests to St. John's hospital in the city closely parallel this pattern, and the similarities between these two types of institution at Coventry permit the two to be looked at together. According to the Valor and other sources it maintained a number of beds with food and drink for overnight accommodation for the poor of the city,

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45. Jordan, op.cit., 260 (fig.).

with an emphasis on the disabled and poor travellers. Doubtless some provision was also made for the sick. Bequests to the hospital concentrated in the period from 1485 to just after 1510. There is a single bequest found in 1518, and the last bequest of all is found in 1530. The former may be the last of the series of bequests stretching from 1485, but the latter stands in isolation.[46] General interest in St. John's hospital seems to have declined by this time. A similar pattern of bequests to hospitals has been found in the London wills.[47]

There is no obvious explanation for this. Long-term institutionalised poor relief of the sort provided by almshouses and hospitals was needed throughout the period 1485 to 1558, in addition to the various doles of testators. The latter are still found from the early 1490s to the late 1510s, so testators were not favouring the former. Indeed, the same testators who founded almshouses, gave houses to be used by the poor and made bequests to St. John's hospital usually also made bequests for doles to the poor. Nor does it seem that testators could more readily afford long-term poor relief in this period than in any other. It is true that an almshouse often required considerable financial outlay, which only the very wealthy could afford, but there were testators after the late 1510s who could easily have managed this, if they had wished. Richard Marler comes immediately to mind. However, not only did the wealthy fail to set up new almshouses; only one left any money to St. John's hospital. In 1530 Thomas Waren bequeathed 3s.4d. to the hospital and a 'couched cloth of the type of saint John which was maister John Hadleys'. It is difficult to explain this.

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46. See Appendix, Table 57.

47. Thomson, op.cit., 187.

It is possible that in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries testators who supported long-term relief were following the king's lead. Henry VII was converting his Savoy palace into a massive hospital to accommodate one hundred poor people nightly, and others may have followed his example. Coventry itself almost benefited from Henry VII's interest in this form of poor relief. By his will Henry VII left 10000 mks. to complete the conversion of Savoy into a hospital, and left a further 40000 Mks. to be spent at Coventry and York to build hospitals in these cities, presumably along the same lines as the Savoy. Assuming the money was to have been equally divided between Coventry and York, these new hospitals, at 20000 mks. (£13333 6s.8d.) a piece, would have been magnificent examples, and could have solved the problem of providing for the poor of these cities.[48] For some unknown reason, however, the hospitals were never built and nothing more is heard about them. Perhaps - in some way - this discouraged local initiative?

From the early years of the sixteenth century bequests to encourage work and promote employment appear in the Coventry wills. These are found in bequests of carding combs and spinning wheels to poor women, and oxen, plough shares and coulters to poor husbandmen in the country surrounding the city. Similar bequests are sometimes found for other towns and areas, usually where the testator was born. Carding combs and spinning wheels were almost certainly intended to enable poor women to make some contribution to their own income rather than rely entirely upon the alms of the generous. Oxen, plough shares and coulters provided much-needed items that poor husbandmen could not afford themselves.[49] More elaborate provisions, in the form of loan

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48. R.M. Clay, The Medieval hospitals of England. (1909), 80

49. See Appendix, Tables 53, 56.

funds, were made to combat unemployment, which were intended to provide a stimulus to the city's declining industries, especially wool. Such bequests probably reflect a change in the outlook of testators' brought about by the city's declining economic fortunes. Bequests to the poor were nearly always intended to provide assistance for a short period of time to enable those who had fallen on hard times to re-establish themselves, and were not intended to provide people with a living. In the city's changed economic circumstances something had to be done to set the poor and unemployed to work and make them self-supporting once again.

Some fluctuations in bequests were due to external factors beyond testator's control. For example, up to the late 1520s and early 1530s many testators were making multiple charitable bequests. After this time such generous bequests fall away. Certain types of bequests disappear altogether - such as gifts of carding combs, spinning wheels, plough shares, coulters and oxen, firewood, clothing, food and money in the winter months. The reason for this was undoubtedly that testators could no longer afford to make these sorts of bequests which required a considerable outlay of money, sometimes over a long period of time.

Accompanying the disappearance of various sorts of charitable bequests was a decline in their overall value from the 1530s. Whereas before testators were bequeathing pounds, thereafter they were bequeathing shillings and even pence. But this did not alter the fact that bequests were intended for the deserving and respectable poor, that is, poor householders. Perhaps as a result of the decline in the value of bequests testators favoured a more localised distribution of their gifts, for whereas bequests were previously distributed to

the poor of the city, now testators restricted their distribution to the immediate neighbourhood in which they lived. Thus, in 1540 Isabell Wade bequeathed 'to every of my pore Neybours wyfes betwene my house and the hey lane And betwene the lytle parke streate ende and the Greyfreer lane a Kercher and 12d. in money And to every pore housholder in the gray freers lane 3d'. In 1544 John Clerk bequeathed 'unto 40 howssholders 40s.12d., a howsse off my neyghburs such as hath nede and the rest where most nede ys'. In 1545 Thomas Dyglen gave 13s.4d. 'to be bestowed amongs my poure neighbours'. In 1546 Thomas Bustarde bequeathed 2s. to every poor householder in Smithford Street where he lived 'frome the hive unto the brydge on bothe sydes the stret', while the same year Morris Gilbert bequeathed 2d. 'to every poore household in the Cooke Streit'. Occasionally, however, a bequest of the more general sort is found after this time, such as that made by Richard Dodd in 1545. He bequeathed £3 to be distributed to 'poor housholders wich be ashamed to begge and be no comen beggers'. Since Dodd did not specify the poor of a particular street, ward or parish his bequest must have been to the poor of the city as a whole. This is the form of most bequests to the poor throughout the rest of the period to 1558. The almost complete absence of charitable bequests between 1533 and 1537 is due to the lack of surviving wills belonging to the wealthy.[50]

The decline in the types of bequests made and the value of those

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50. PCC, 27 Alenger; LJRO, Clerke, John, 13/10/45; PCC, F 44 Pynyng; LJRO, Bustarde, Thomas, 27/4/47; Gilbert, Maurice, 27/4/47; PCC, 6 Alen. D.M. Palliser, Tudor York, (OUP 1979), 213, finds evidence of the new sort of bequest in York as early as 1528.

which were still made has been noted elsewhere in the wills. In some instances this had a further effect, particularly in the case of provision for masses for the health of the soul. Since testators were no longer endowing anniversary obits, the doles to the poor which often accompanied the obit ceased as well.[51] This was not compensated for, however, by the elaboration of funerals which paralleled the decline in provision for the health of the soul, and which also saw an increase in funeral doles. Obit doles provided for regular, yearly poor relief, whereas the funeral doles were a once-and-for-all distribution. In the case of charitable bequests as a whole, the effects of the decline in bequests could not have come at a worse time, because they were needed now more than ever as the city entered one of its worst periods of economic depression. This was an inherent weakness in a private charitable system which relied upon individuals' generosity. If circumstances changed for the worse people were unlikely to give as generously as hitherto.

Bequests changed again after 1547 thanks to the religious changes of Edward VI's reign. The changes were in the kinds of bequests made, however, rather than in their value. Bequests to the poor accompanying masses and prayers ceased altogether with the repudiation of Purgatory and the dissolution of intercessory institutions, and eventually the rejection of the mass. Bequests to be distributed on holy days also disappear. Gifts at funerals and the employment of the poor to carry lights declined dramatically, but did not cease altogether. If giving to the poor on such occasions declined, then testators in Coventry gave to the poor in other ways. In Edward's reign there is a noticeable increase in the number of bequests to the poor to be distributed

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51. See Appendix, Table 55.

simply at the discretion of executors, which had the effect, intended or not, of compensating for the decline of bequests to the poor of other kinds. After 1547 the citizens of Coventry were, as far as can be ascertained, giving to the poor for the same reasons as they had always done: for the health of their souls. There was still widespread adherence to the traditional belief in the importance of good works. The Reformation Parliament had upheld it in the 'act for punishment of sturdy vagabonds and beggars' of 1536, which provided for the 'mayor, governors, and head officers of every city, borough and town corporate, and the churchwardens or two other of every parish of this realm' to 'take such discreet and convenient order, by gathering and procuring of such charitable and voluntary alms of the good christian people within the same, with boxes every Sunday, holy day, and other festival day or otherwise'. The people were to be exhorted by the clergy 'in all and every their sermons, collations, biddings of the beads as in time of all confessions, and at the making of wills or testaments of any persons at all times of the year' to give alms. Open begging was forbidden, and thereby private almsgiving, except in a person's own parish and to prisoners. Mention was also made of the friars and the monasteries. These clauses were added to the bill after the idea of a compulsory poor-rate, i.e. a tax, had been rejected. Parliament upheld the traditional view of poor relief, that unless entirely voluntary it could not be an act of Christian charity and so a good work. The Act was to be confirmed by the next Parliament, a measure which further indicates the hostility of Parliament towards it, and it was almost certainly allowed to lapse. Further attempts were made in 1547 to introduce a system of parish-based poor relief. The Injunctions of July that year ordered that

a chest was to be set up in each parish church and that the clergy were 'from time to time' to exhort their parishioners to give to the chest. Testators were singled out in the Injunctions for special attention. The subsequent 'act for the punishment of vagabonds and for the relief of the poor and impotent persons' repeated the Injunctions and ordered that there were to be weekly collections in the parish churches after exhortation by the preachers. These measures, like the 1536 Act, were not welcomed, even though persuasion and not coercion was used to secure contributions to the poormen's chests.

The idea of communal alms was reaffirmed by another Edwardian Act of 1552 for 'the provision and relief of the poor'. Open begging was forbidden and local authorities were instructed to nominate two collectors of alms for weekly Sunday collections. However, this act also sought to introduce a compulsory poor-rate, and it seems that it was to no avail. The fact that another act re-affirming the system of poor boxes was thought necessary, indicates that the first one was proving ineffective, and that unless people were forced to provide for the poor they would not do so.

In Coventry, testators continued throughout Edward VI's reign to give to the poor in the same way as they had always done. They are found giving a small sum to the poor box of their parish church, in accordance no doubt with the suggestion of a local priest, while making a larger bequest to the poor to be distributed in the time-honoured way. Edwardian testators continued the practice, begun in the 1530s of restricting the distribution area of their bequests to their streets or neighbourhoods. In 1548 John Thrushare bequeathed 6d. to the poor box in St. Michael's and 1d. to every householder without New Gate.

The following year Thomas Bedull bequeathed 6d. to the poor box in St. Michael's and 5s. to be dealt to the poor where there was most need the day of his burial. In 1550 Thomas Spenser gave 20d. to the poor box in Holy Trinity and instructed his executrix 'to dispose to the poor according to gods wyl as she shal think good', while John Bond gave 8d. to the poor box in St. Michael's and 13s.4d. to the poor people of Gosford Street ward, and John Eburne gave 20d. to St.Michael's poor box and £8 to pay for his burial and be distributed in alms to the poor. In 1551 Joan Lunt gave 12d. to the poor box in St. Michael's and a smock each to four women. The following year Elizabeth Harvye gave 3s.4d. to the poormen's chest in Holy Trinity and 12d. to the same in St. Michael's and 40s. to be distributed to the poor.[52]

Not all the testators who made bequests to the poor in Edward's reign gave to the poormen's chests, however. A few persisted in making bequests in the usual way. The most significant is Simon Parker, who bequeathed a gown each to twelve poor men 'to praye for me' in 1550. In 1551 John Wall instructed his executors to make a distribution to the poor after their discretion. The following year John Somerfield bequeathed 2d. to 'everi howshold in the coke strete'. In 1553 John Sparks bequeathed 40s. to the poor, Ralph Hopkins gave clothes to be sold to raise money for the poor, and Robert Whitney gave 12d. in bread.[53]

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52. LJRO, Thrushare, John, C 1550; Bedull, Thomas, 5/3/49; Spenser, Thomas, 13/4/51; Bond, John, 12/5/50; Lunt, Joan, 25/5/52; Harvye, Elizabeth, 14/1/52.

53. LJRO, Parker, Simon, 13/4/51; Wall, John, 12/10/51; Somerfield, John, 17/10/52; Sparks, John, 17/4/53; Hopkins, Ralph, 16/10/55.

With the Accession of Mary there is a return to the traditional forms of poor relief. Only one testator early in her reign made a bequest to a poormen's chest in a parish church. By his will of 31 August 1553 John Hall bequeathed 12d to the poorman's chest in Holy Trinity. The inhabitants of Coventry seem to have rejected the idea of a parish-based system of poor relief immediately upon Mary's accession in favour of traditional methods.[54] There is no indication of the fate of the poormen's chests in St. Michael's and Holy Trinity, however, but since testators clearly ignored them it can perhaps be assumed that they were removed some time after 1553.

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The 1530s and 1540s saw not only a decline in the value of charitable bequests, and the disappearance of some altogether, but also the destruction of religious institutions which had previously made a considerable contribution to poor relief in Coventry. The dissolution of the cathedral priory and the charterhouse, followed by the forced dissolution of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist, the private dissolution of Bond's Hospital, and the dissolution of the guilds, chantries and other endowments for masses and prayers, swept away not only the institutions themselves, but their contributions to the relief of poverty in the city.

In order to appreciate the loss of poor relief which the dissolution of so many institutions brought about, we will look at the charitable contributions they made. The fullest account of monastic almsgiving is that found in the returns of the commissioners of the Valor Ecclesiasticus. A. Savine analysed the charitable constitutions of the monasteries, and concluded that at this time they were giving

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54. LJRO, Hall, John, 16/10/53.

on average only 2½% of their gross annual income to charity. He was quick to point out, however, that this figure was based on only a part of the total contributions of each house, for the commissioners recorded only the alms which were allowed to go tax-free. The Act of First Fruits and Tenths ordered the commissioners to tax voluntary alms, but to deduct from their gross annual income the alms given yearly in compliance with any foundation or royal ordinance. These were the 'compulsory' alms, established by the founders of the houses, or by others who granted property to them on the condition that they made an annual distribution to the poor. The Commissioners did not record any voluntary alms which the houses cared to make. Dom David Knowles considered that voluntary giving could have substantially increased the proportion of income devoted to this purpose, which might have been as high as 10% on average. This was still far short of the 25% which Canon Law said should be given for charitable purposes out of ecclesiastical incomes.[55]

Averages serve only as a guide by which to judge individual examples, however, and the religious houses in Coventry present their own story. The value of compulsory alms of the cathedral priory amounted to £27 4s.8d., or 3.6% of the house's gross income of £748 13s.1d. This sum comprised £14 13s.4d. given to the Hospital of St. John the Baptist in Coventry and £12 11s.8d. in general alms to the poor in compliance with the wishes of founders and benefactors of the house. The house also gave £6 13s.8d. in non-compulsory alms, which went to the poor and in hospitality to travellers, and £12 11s.4d. to support fourteen poor scholars in the monastery. These two latter

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55. A. Savine, English Monasteries on the Eve of the Dissolution, (Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History, 1909), 238-39; D. Knowles, The Religious Orders in England, III (Cambridge, 1959), 264-67.

sums were noted by the commissioners, but were not accepted as compulsory payments when the Exchequer revised their returns and reversed their decision to count them as such. Perhaps the monks included them in the hope that they would be looked upon as compulsory sums. The total amount given by the cathedral priory for charitable uses, as listed in the Valor Ecclesiasticus, was £46 18s.10d., or 6.1% of the house's gross yearly income.[56] Of course, there may have been other sums given for this purpose which the monks did not think would stand any chance of being counted as compulsory payments, and so no record of them exists.

The Charterhouse just outside the city gave a staggering £77 6s.4d., or 30% of its gross annual income, of £251 5s.9d., in charitable works. Little of it was distributed in and around Coventry, however. Of the total sum £26 13s.4d. was given to the Hospital of St. John the Evangelist and St. Anne of Okeham, Rutland, 3s.4d. was distributed in general alms in the parish of Potterspury, Northamptonshire, and £2 13s.4d. was distributed to the poor in the parish of Wolston, Warwickshire, a few miles to the west of the city. Of the remaining money, 3s.4d. was given to the Whitefriars in Coventry, 10s.1d. was given in alms in compliance with the wishes of founders and benefactors of the house, £2 13s.4d. was set aside for hospitality to travellers and £14 10s. was distributed to the poor at the gates of the monastery in bread, beer and thirty quarters of rye and malt each year, which was exempted from tax despite the fact that the monks could not name the benefactors of the alms. However, £30 which was given to support twelve poor scholars, like the money given for the same purpose by the cathedral priory, was not exempted, even though the monks produced charters of

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56. Valor., 51 - 2.

English kings who had made grants for the express purpose of education. A. Savine points out that only a very few sums given for the education of poor scholars by monasteries were exempted from taxation at the revision of the returns by the Exchequer, so the houses at Coventry were not treated differently from houses elsewhere.[57]

The Church also provided more institutionalised forms of charity. Such an institution was the hospital of St. John the Baptist in Coventry, which provided beds to accommodate twenty four to thirty people overnight. The hospital spent £3 on repairing the beds each year, but this was not exempted from taxation by the Valor. The citizens of Coventry contributed to the maintenance of the beds, of course, through their bequests. Various sums provided for by the founders and benefactors of the hospital were exempted from taxation, however, such as the 29s.6d. that was dealt to the poor in accordance with the wishes of Laurence Hunt, and John Pake, Edward Allesley and John Yate, and 26s. distributed to the poor at the hospital gates in accordance with the wishes of the hospital's founders. In all, 5.7% of the hospital's gross yearly income was spent on maintaining its facilities, and in alms to the poor. More importantly, its very purpose was to provide much needed accommodation for the poor in the city, a contribution which cannot be expressed in cash terms.[58]

Both of the great socio-religious guilds in Coventry gave assistance to those of their members who had fallen into poverty. That it was only their members who received assistance must be stressed. Accommodation free of rent, or at a reduced rent, as well as alms for

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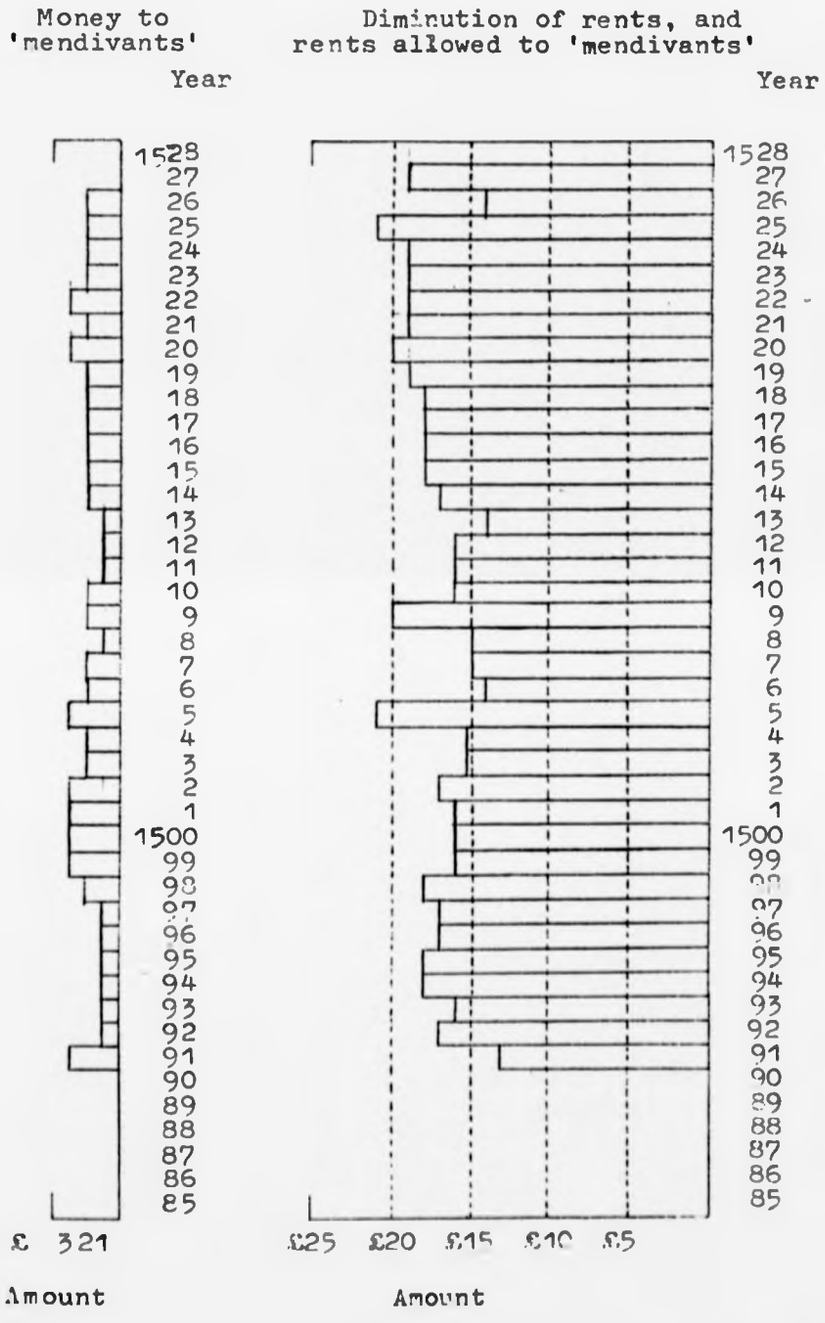
57. ibid., 54.

58. ibid., 53.

TABLE III The provision of poor relief by Corpus Christi Guild for its members.



Source; CRO, A6.

their poor brethren and sisters were the usual forms which such assistance took. The extent of such relief so far as Trinity Guild is concerned is largely unknown except for a few scattered references, because the guild's records have not survived. From the surviving accounts of Corpus Christi Guild, however, almost a complete picture of the assistance given by the guild to its members can be constructed(See Table III). The guild's accounts list under the heading 'payments to mendivants in money' that which was given in direct alms money, and under the heading 'diminusons of the seyd Rents .....& for houses that mendifaunts holdyn' the accommodation that was provided rent free or at a reduced rent. In the case of the latter provision, the accounts do not state what percentage of the total sum was allowed for accommodation for poor members. On only one occasion were the two figures listed separately. In 1491 the diminished rents amounted to £12 19s.10½d., and the rents allowed to poor members came to £3 9s.4d., which was 18.75% of the whole.[59]

The guild's accounts record both sets of payments from 1491 to 1526. The accounts for 1527 make no reference to money for 'mendivaunts', while those for 1528 give no breakdown of the payments made during the previous year. It should be remembered that by this time the guild had lost approximately one third of its rents, and was in very serious financial difficulties. There is no breakdown of the accounts for 1529 and no accounts for 1530 at all, but in 1531 it was stated that £2 9s. 3d. had been allowed 'for mendifants to divers persons in money and some howssas appoynted'. Similarly, in 1532 it was stated that £1 13s. had been allowed 'of mendivants in money and a house to mother blewitt'. Because the guild was in financial

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59. CRO, A6, f 36.

trouble itself, it could not afford to give as much assistance to its poorer members as it had once done, and after 1532 whatever payments were made to the poor members, and whatever accommodation was provided for them, were included in a lump sum of money out of which these payments were made, along with those for principal feast days and general days, murage payments to the city chamberlains and a dinner when the new master of the guild was elected. In 1533 this sum amounted to £8 3s., in 1534 £9. 19s.9d. In 1535, the year in which Corpus Christi Guild amalgamated with Holy Trinity Guild, the sum amounted to £28 0s.16½d. and in 1536 it was £36 0s.12d. The accounts for 1537 and 1538 are not extant, but from 1539 to 1546 money in alms to the poor members of Corpus Christi Guild features once again in the guild's accounts. In 1539 and 1540 five women, the same in both years, received each year £1 7s.4d. between them. In 1541 and 1542 14s. was given each year to poor brethren and sisters. In 1543 this had fallen to 12s.4d. For 1544, 1545 and 1546 there are no payments recorded to 'mendivaunts' of the guild.

Probably as a result of their declining fortunes, the money which John Haddon had given in 1518 for the guilds to maintain their properties was redirected in 1539 into what must have been considered more worthwhile uses. By his will of this year Julian Nethermyll, executor to Haddon's will, reapportioned the £100 which went to the guilds. The £100 for young men of the Drapers and the £100 for all other occupations were not mentioned by Nethermyll in his will, and were presumably being applied according to Haddon's wishes. The £100 which Haddon gave to the city wardens had apparently been split between them and the chamberlains, £60 going to the former and £40 to the latter, which arrangement Nethermyll wished to continue. The £100 which had gone

to the guilds was to be allocated as follows: £10 to the Butchers 'to thentent the feloship of that Craft do sell the better penyworthes of vitall' and £10 to the Bakers for the same purpose. The remaining £80 was to be given in amounts of £4 to twenty 'yonge begynners' of the Cappers or other occupations. To continue to give the £100 to the guilds which were in most dire straits, Corpus Christi having amalgamated with Trinity in 1535 in order to survive, was not to use it wisely. It might have served to prop up the guilds somewhat, but since it could do nothing to prevent their decline to continue to give it to them was to waste resources which could be better used in promoting work and employment elsewhere in the city.[60]

Then there were the private foundations of Bond's and Ford's hospitals, and the many chantries and other endowments for masses and prayers which carried with them provision for the distribution of alms to the poor. The contributions of the two hospitals was undoubtedly great, but it is impossible to estimate the true contribution to poor relief made by these foundations, because no reliable survey of them was made by the chantry commissioners of both 1545 and 1547. There was a decline in new foundations of this sort after the late 1520s and early 1530s of course, but earlier foundations were presumably still supplying relief. It is difficult to be sure, however, because of the lack of competent surveys. Almost certainly some provisions had fallen by the wayside as endowment lands decayed and could no longer support them, but some must have survived.

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With the onset of the dissolutions, there is the question of the extent to which the contributions to poor relief by the former

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60. PCC, 6 Alenger.

institutions continued, or was preserved. So far as the monasteries were concerned, in every case but one the evidence indicates that any such contributions ceased with their dissolution. The exception did not help Coventry, however. The Charterhouse just outside the city had paid £26 13s.4d. to the Hospital of St. John the Evangelist and St. Anne of Okeham in Rutland before its dissolution, which sum the Valor stated was paid 'per composicionem', that is, by some agreement between the monks of the charterhouse and the hospital. This, as subsequent evidence reveals, named the property from which the money was derived: the manor of Edyweston in Rutland. This manor remained in the hands of the Crown until 1550, when it was granted as part of a gift, and for a nominal sum, to William marquess of Northampton, 'for services against rebels and traitors'. A provision of the grant was that he paid to the warden of the hospital the £26 13s.4d. each year which had always been paid 'according to the form of a composition between the said warden and the Carthusian priory of Coventry'. The Crown appears to have paid the money itself in the meantime.[61]

Payment had been made to the hospital without interruption because there was a clear statement of which rents belonging to the Charterhouse went to make it up. Because of this it would not have been difficult to attach the responsibility for payment to who ever obtained the manor in the end. The Valor differentiated between provision for alms and education in accordance with the wishes of founders, benefactors and royal ordinances, and those provisions which the houses cared to make themselves. Presumably there was some record of what lands had been given by the former out of which such provision was made, so that it would not have been impossible to pass these

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61. Valor, 54; CPR Edward VI, IV, 147.

responsibilities on to the grantees of these lands. In the case of the latter sort of provision it would have proved impossible to ascertain from which lands it derived. The above-mentioned example is the only one where the responsibility was passed on. The reason why responsibilities for poor relief and education were not generally passed on to the grantees was probably that the lands were sold more easily without them being attached. Grantees would probably have found it intolerable to have such charges upon property they purchased.

The next blow to befall the city was the loss of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist in 1545, some six years after the dissolution of the monasteries. The 'surrender' of the hospital, and the subsequent grant of it and all its lands to John Hales of Kent only four months later has already been discussed. Hales did in fact set up a school in the city, but not in the way which the corporation had come to expect he was required to. It believed wrongly that the lands belonging to St. John's Hospital had been given to endow the school. In fact, the licence did not specify this, leaving it to Hales to decide which of his lands he gave to endow the school. All that Hales promised was to found and endow a school in return for the grant of St. John's Hospital and its possessions, but he did not agree to use the latter in part or wholly. Moreover, he had successfully manouevered to ensure that neither the grant nor the licence mentioned each other, and so, beyond a verbal promise to Henry VIII to establish a school, there was no evidence that Hales obtained the hospital on this understanding. As the History of the school's foundation pointed out, Hales had asked Henry VIII that the property grant 'might be free without any Mention or Notice in the Patent of anything to be given for the Endowment of a School'! Similarly, the licence made

no mention of any lands having been granted to endow it. Only the particulars linked the two grants, and then only loosely.[62] Hence problems faced by the corporation in getting the school established were considerable.

The History of the school's foundation states that Hales established a school in the choir of the Whitefriars church, which he 'maintained at his own expense', refusing to endow it properly or to part with any property. He hired a 'Mr. Sherwyn' as the head master, probably Thomas Sherwyn (who received £30 a year), an usher (who received £10 a year), and a 'Mr. Johnson of Oxford, Music Master', probably William Johnson, (who received £6 13s.4d.) a year and his board. It goes on to say that the school did not continue long in the Whitefriars, bocause two aldermen of the city, John Tallants, mayor in 1545, and Robert Kirvyn, mayor in 1535, 'finding a Defect in the Patent, and that Mr. Hales had not actually purchased the Church of the Whitefriars either through Envy of the Work or some other sinister Motive, procured a Grant of it from the Crown, and obliged Mr. Hales to remove the Seats, which he had provided for the scholars, to the Church of St. John's Hospital'. The corporation did not stop here, however, for the History relates that in Edward VI's reign 'during Mr. Hales Absence in Germany', which began in early 1551, Tallants and Kirvyn with others petitioned the Chancellor, claiming that 'K.H. VIII had granted and given to the said Mr. Hales certain Houses and Lands, which he unjustly detained to his own use, though the same were designed by the K., for the Foundation of a School'.[63] Nothing came

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62. An Account of the Many and Great Loans, Benefactions, and Charities Belon Belonging to the City of Coventry . . . , anon. (Coventry and London, 1733), 73; see above, 282-83.

63. ibid., 74.

of this petition, however, perhaps because it claimed that specific lands had been given to endow the school when none had.

The corporation tried again in Mary's reign, when the recorder, John Throckmorton, petitioned the Privy Council in July 1555. This petition is extant, albeit in draft form, and purports to show how the city had sustained 'much damage by three sundry occasions'. The first was the loss of the Hospital of St. John the Baptist, and the petition goes on to give a resume of the contribution made by the hospital to the relief of poverty in Coventry and to the provision of divine service there. It points out that the hospital 'commonly received and lodged nightly a great number of the poor of the said City, and of divers other poor travellers by the way', for which purpose there were maintained 'thirty, or at the least twenty-four beds, with necessaries thereto', and that there were five women, or 'Sisters', who 'had the charge of all provisions and requisites to the said poor, both as to lodging and otherwise'. The hospital had been maintained for these 'godly purposes' until it had been 'clearly dissolved and defaced' by Hales 'by colour of a gift or grant of the possessions of the same'. The petition catalogues the defacing of the hospital by Hales: the poor were 'utterly expulsed', the bedsteads, bedding and all other provision for the poor being broken up and taken away, the lead, bells and the buildings in the precincts, along with the woods belonging to the same were sold for £1000, 'beside other great sums of money from the sale of divers tenements, lands and buildings, being parcel of the said possessions'.

The second 'occasion' of the damage to the city was Hales' failure to establish a school. The petition gives a somewhat different version

of events from that in the History. It states that the city had already obtained the Whitefriars church before Hales secured his grant of the hospital and its lands, and that he 'required of them liberty to use the said Church, (wherein he pretended to establish the said School), which request being granted, he appointed a Schoolmaster there, who till lately exercised that office, but in no ways as it ought to have been, and now there is neither Schoolmaster or School, to the great damage of the city'. The corporation, 'considering the forbearing of the said Church, and the benefit and profit they might have had by defacing it', asked Hales 'how, and after what manner, the said School should be erected and established, to continue perpetually according to their expectation and honest intention'. Hales would give no answer, however, but to tell the corporation 'that they should have nothing to do with that matter, nor be made privy to any thing concerning the establishment thereof'. The petition concludes this section by stating that after such a complete rebuff by Hales, the corporation despaired of the school ever being properly founded without the intervention of the Queen.

The third 'occasion' of damage to the city is not very clear. It is not fully developed in the draft, which states only that 'in the said City be only two parish Churches, whereof one called St. Michael's is one of the most notable and greatest Parishes within this realm, considering the multitude of people in the same'. The object of this incomplete third section remains a mystery. The point about the city having only two parish churches usually heralded a request on the part of the corporation to acquire those churches belonging to the religious houses or the guilds, but it is not clear

how this might have been worked into the present petition.[64]

Like the petition in Edward's reign, that in Mary's also came to nothing, but again the corporation would not let the matter lie. When Elizabeth I visited Coventry in 1565 the opportunity was used to raise the matter of the school again. Hales had returned from his self-imposed exile at the beginning of the new reign, but it is not known if he set up the school again or not. In his welcoming address to Elizabeth, the recorder, John Throckmorton, who had presented the corporation's case to the Privy Council ten years before, referred to the school. He stated that the queen's father had 'founded in this City, for the maintenance of learning, a free school, or rather college as he intended, for the better education of the youth of this City in virtue and learning, and for the continuance therof passed, or let go certain lands of great value, which this City doth not enjoy, but are unjustly deprived of the same by sinister, underhand, unjust means, albeit his Grace assured the same to that only use and intent'. Throckmorton besought Elizabeth to hear their complaint, which she evidently did, because she instructed Sir William Cecil to look into the matter. But neither he, nor the Chancellor, who examined Hales' letters patent, could find any mention of any houses or lands given or reserved for the endowment of a school, as Hales had intended that anyone checking the letters patent should. It was no doubt upon this point that the two previous petitions had also foundered, and any sub-

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64. The draft of the petition was printed by T. Sharpe, Illustrative Papers on the History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry ... from Original and Mostly Unpublished Documents. (Birmingham, 1871), 162 - 63, and its date can be established by letters to Throckmorton from the mayor and aldermen at the time he was presenting the petition to the Privy Council; CRO, A79/66B, A79/68A.

sequent ones would do likewise.[65]

Nothing further could be done, and nothing was done until Hales himself finally took steps to establish the school after his death in some way approaching what was originally intended. By a deed of feoffment of 17 December 1572 he gave certain houses, lands, mills and quitrents to Thomas Docwra and Bartholomew Hales, his brother. Hales died just over a week later on 26 December. By another deed of 5 March 1573 Docwra and Bartholomew Hales conveyed the lands, etc., to the corporation of Coventry, who, by yet another deed of the same day covenanted to use the same to endow the school. Unfortunately, the school was not even now properly established, because a deed of feoffment was not itself a conveyance. Though the deed of conveyance by John Hales to his brother and Docwra had been duly executed, the feoffees had not taken either delivery of seisin, that is, delivery of possession, or attornments, i.e. acknowledgment by the tenants of the properties that they held them of the feoffees as legal owners. Consequently, the feoffees did not enjoy a good title to the lands and so could not transfer a good title to the corporation.[66]

In 1581 a private Act of Parliament had to be obtained confirming the deed of 1573 in order to put the matter right. The lands with which the school was eventually endowed amounted to the yearly value of £43 11s.2d., less than a third of the possible value provided for under the licence. Moreover, much of the property had belonged not to the hospital but to the cathedral priory in Coventry and the monastery at Kenilworth. The act listed the lands as 'all the Scyte

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65. B. Poole, Coventry : its History and Antiquities, (London and Coventry, 1870), 91.

66. Sharpe, op.cit., 163 - 64.

of the howse and church of the late Hospital of St. John the Baptist in the said Cyttie, and all his howses, buyldings, lands, and tenements, with their appurtenances within the said presinct of the said Hospital in the said Cyttie, and also all his howses, buyldings, and gardens with their appurtenances within the said Cyttie, which lately did appertain or belong to the said Hospital, and all his messuages, howses, buyldings and gardens within the said Cyttie, which lately were parcel of the possessions of the late Monastery or Cathedral Church of Coventry, and also all his messuages, howses, and buyldings, landes, and tenements, with appurtenances, which late were parcel of the possessions of the late Monastery of Kyllingworth, in the County of Warwick, and also all those his Mylnes, with the appurtenances in the said Cyttie and Suburbs of the same called White-Friars-Mylne, Bastill-Mylne, and Hill-Mylne, with their appurtenances'. The conveyance from Hales to his brother and Thomas Docwra allowed for a schoolmaster, who was to receive £20 a year, not £30 as was originally provided; an usher, who was to receive £10 and a house within the precincts of the hospital free of rent; a music master, who was to receive 52s. a year to teach music three times a week to those who were willing to learn; and a bailiff, who was to receive 26s.8d a year. The residue of the rents from the lands were to be used to repair the property in the first place, and any overplus was to go to the mayor to augment the salaries of the schoolmasters and the usher.[67] Therefore, some thirty six years had elapsed between the issuing of the licence to found the school and its foundation.

The dispute between Hales and the corporation was not the only one of its kind to arise out of the dissolutions. A largely

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67. ibid., 164 - 65

uncatalogued collection of documents preserved in the Coventry Records Office reveals that the corporation was involved in a protracted dispute with Thomas Bond the younger, grandson of the founder of Bond's beadhouse, over the continuation of the beadhouse. Thomas Bond the younger had maintained his grandfather's beadhouse since the death of John Bond, his father, in 1538 until shortly after the passing of the Henrician Chantries Act in 1545, when he took the endowment lands for his own. The corporation objected to his doing this on the grounds that the beadhouse had been given for the relief of poverty in the City. It took steps, therefore, to prevent Bond from taking the lands and thereby dissolving the beadhouse, which led it into a lengthy lawsuit lasting throughout Edward VI's reign.

The beadhouse had been maintained as a private concern since it had been built. It will be remembered that Trinity Guild had rebuffed all attempts to transfer possession of the endowment lands to it by Thomas Bond the elder's executors, including his son John, who consequently maintained the beadhouse himself as a private concern. He tried subsequently on a number of occasions to transfer the lands to Trinity Guild, but without success, so that at the time of his death it was still a privately maintained foundation. By his will he directed his executors to offer the lands to Trinity Guild once more, and if it refused to accept them, he charged his son Thomas and his heirs to see his will and his father's will truly performed in every point regarding the beadhouse. John Bond was understandably concerned that the endowment lands should not be broken up and the beadhouse cease to exist. He had himself sold certain parcels of the lands in Byfield and Chadshunt to the yearly value of £3 15s., but by his will he gave his property in Coventry in their place -

either to be sold and other lands purchased in their place, or to be sold in order to buy back the other lands he had sold.[68] His honesty prevented him from profiting at the expense of his father's foundation, but his action in selling the lands in the first place indicates the basic problem of a foundation whose endowment lands were not assured to it. If Thomas Bond the younger had also offered the lands to Trinity Guild, it seems the guild refused to take them once more, and he maintained his grandfather's beadhouse as his father had done before him, until just after the passing of the Henrician Chantries Act.

The corporation tried first of all to secure a private act of Parliament to prevent Bond despoiling his grandfather's beadhouse. This was in early 1548, after Parliament had returned after Christmas. All the references to the act are contained in the Journal of the House of Commons, which records that the city introduced their bill on 7 January. The entry in the Journal for this day reads, 'The Bill for the City of Coventry to Mr. Recorder', which is followed on 12 January by 'The Bill for the City of Coventry', when, presumably, it had its first reading. Two days later, on 14 January, it was ordered 'that Bonde shall have a Copy of the Bill of Coventry and make Answer on Saturday next', which would have been 21 January. For this day the Journal reads 'Bonde hath brought his Answer, and hath Day Friday next', being 27 January. On 25 January there is an entry which states that 'Bonde hath Day till Tomorrow', which is the last mention of the bill.[69] Since there are no further entries, and no act was passed, the corporation evidently failed in their attempt on

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68. PCC, Dyngley.

69. T. Vardon and T.E. May, (eds.), Journals of the House of Commons, (London 1803), 5 - 7.

this occasion.

Not to be daunted by this failure, however, the corporation took the matter before the Court of Chancery. Given the circumstances surrounding the case it was more likely that the corporation would gain a ruling in their favour from a court of equity. The corporation submitted a complaint against Bond to the court of Chancery in 1548. It can be dated to this year from internal evidence. The bill stated that Bond maintained the beadhouse for about eight years after the death of his father. Since John Bond had died in 1538, this would mean that it was about the year 1546 that Bond began to run it down. This is corroborated by the subsequent statement in the complaint that 'within ii or iii year past ..... the seid Thomas .... myndyng by all the Wayes & means he could or can to employe use the seid lands at hys Will and plesure whyche not onely omyt the fynding of certeyn of the seyd poor men and allso the preacher but allso sellyth dyvers porcons of the seid lands & dyvers parcelles of the seyd woods growynge uppon the same meanyng no lesse then clerely to dissolve the seid almes house'.[70] Since the complaint was submitted two or three years after Bond began to do this, it can be dated to 1548-49. Some time in late 1548, or very early in 1549, but no later, would seem to be the time the complaint was submitted. By March 1549 the matter was well in hand.

The complaint set out at some length the contents of Thomas Bond

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70. CRO, Access. 54, which includes amongst various other records a series of original documents affixed to pages in a book with the frontispiece, 'Documents Relating to Bond's Hospital in the City of Coventry Selected by George Eld from the Treasury of The Mayor, Bailiffs & Comminalty and Presented by them to the Trustees of the Hospital Estates, 1834', f 8., where the folio numbers refer to the folios of the documents themselves.

the elder's will with regard to his beadhouse; stated that a feoffment of lands to the value of fifty pounds had taken place, rehearsed the conditions of the licence of mortmain that had been obtained, although the refusal of Trinity Guild to accept the lands was not mentioned, and claimed that a rental of the endowment lands had been given to the corporation by John Bond, although this, together with other documents relating to the foundation, was no longer in the possession of the corporation. One of the problems faced by the corporation was that all the papers relating to the beadhouse had been appropriated by Thomas Bond the younger. The complaint said that 'divers byddences munyments & wrytyngs concernyng the seyd lands & other the premysses ben casually come to the hands of the seyd Thomas Bond concernyng the Assigannes of the same unto the godly uses before remembrid', which may have played a large part in the failure of the private bill introduced into Parliament in January 1548.[71] Without these things the corporation's case against Bond was in danger of failing because it could produce no evidence to substantiate its claims. Obviously, Bond had collected all the records in order to prevent a successful case ever being brought against him.

The corporation was not to be out-manoeuvred in this way, however. It stated in its complaint that Bond had taken a 'corporeal oath' at his father's death bed truly to perform his will and that of his grandfather's, and that there were certain persons still living in the counties of Lancashire and Warwickshire who had witnessed the oath.[72] The complaint said that Bond's father had called him to his bedside and charged him to perform his grandfather's will and the feoffment

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71. ibid., f 9.

72. ibid., loc.cit.

of lands without 'contradiction, let or disturbance', which he had faithfully promised to do. His father, however, directed him to attend church and hear divine service before committing himself fully, and 'at hys retourne agayne beynge the same day this request was made unto hym dyd allso offer to take hye a corporall othe uppon a booke that he wold performe hys seid grandfather's & ffathers will & the heirs of the seyde ffeoffement & lyce [nce] of mortmayne'. This being the case, the corporation requested in their complaint that a commission should be set up to examine the surviving witnesses to Bond's oath. This request was made because they were quite old now, and a journey to London to appear before the court in person would be a hardship to them. The corporation requested further that, in the meantime, Bond should be served with an injunction preventing him from 'sellyng alyenynge demysynge or sellynge to ferm of eny parte of the seid lands conteynyd in the said Rentall or any of the woods or other profits comynge or growynge of the same', as well as directing him to maintain the beadhouse and the preacher as it had been maintained since its foundation, until the case could be heard.[73] A commission was duly appointed, and, presumably, an injunction was issued, although there is no record of it. Before discussing the findings of the commission, however, let us look at Bond's reply to the corporation's complaint.

Bond defended his action on the grounds that 'the acte lately maid wherby Colledges Chauntryes and fraternyties ben geven to the Kings maiestye' outlawed the 'superstitious practises' surrounding the beadhouse. Bond does not state which of the Chantries Acts he is referring to. It must have been the recent Edwardian Act, even

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73. ibid., f 7, 10.

though he had begun to dissolve the beadhouse as a result of the previous Henrician Act. He made much of the inter-relationship between the beadhouse and Trinity Guild, harking back to the fact that it had been established for the benefit of the members of the guild, and arguing that because the latter had been outlawed the provisions of his grandfather's will could not be fulfilled. He stated that the ten poor men were to be selected 'on a general daye of the said Trynytye guyld', that they were to fast 'for the good prosperytye of the brethren of the said Trynytye guyld and for the sooles that be departed', that they 'shuld at all tymes be redy to goo with procession uppon generall procession dayes to pray for the benefactors of the said Trynytye guyld' and that they 'shuld every day saye thre tymes the ladyes psalter and be at every dirge and masse and their to saye the ladies psalter for the brethren and Sustern of the said Trynytye guyld with other like supersticyous thyngs mensyoned in the same will', which, he said, 'now by the kyngs maiesties procedings and lawes ar lawfully prohibited and abrofate'. He also pointed out that his grandfather's will provided for a secular priest to preach a certain number of sermons each year, 'whych shuld be a brother of the said Trynytye guyld and corpus xpi guyld'.[74]

Bond claimed that because the guilds had been dissolved by the Chantries Act, it was not possible to carry out his grandfather's will. He claimed that 'the fundynge of the seyd ten poore men and the precher at this present cannot by any means be observed and kept according to the mynd and will of the said Thomas Bond for that the said ten poore men shuld be appointed and taken of the brethern of the said Trynytye guyld and corpus xpi guylds and the same precher to be a brother of the same in suche manner as is afore expressed the wiche said too

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74. ibid., ff12 - 13.

gildes ar nowe by the acte lately maid werby Colledges Chauntryes guylds and fraternytyies ben geven to the Kings maiestye clerely dissolved and extincte so that ther dothe not remayne any suche brethern of the same whiche canne or may be appoynted accordinge to the said will expressed'. By reason of all this Bond thought that 'neither by lawe nor consyence he ought to be compelled to performe the said will and testament whiche by thorder of the lawe is not only voyd and of non effect but also impossible to be observed accordynge to the entent and meanyng of the maker of the same'.[75]

By adopting this line of argument, Bond put himself in an awkward position, for if he claimed that his grandfather's beadhouse could no longer be maintained according to his will, he could not claim the lands belonging to it, since, by virtue of the Chantries Act, all the lands given for 'superstitious purposes' passed to the King. Bond tried to cover himself on this point by denying that his grandfather's beadhouse had ever been established. He also denied that his grandfather had ever provided for an almshouse to be established at Bablake for poor men, that there was to be a preacher, that there had ever been an enfeoffment of lands, that his grandfather had directed his executors to appoint the best of his lands to endow any almshouse, that any lands were ever assured to any such purpose, that a licence of mortmain had ever been obtained, or that his father had ever maintained such an almshouse during his life. All that Bond would admit was that his father 'dyd partely go aboute to accomplishe certayne thyngs mensyoned in the said will but the said John Bond in all his lif dyd never make any lawful conveyaunce or assuraunce of any of his lands tenements or heredytaments to any further uses or entents as in

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75. ibid., ff 14 - 15.

the said will and testament of the said Thomas Bond deceased',[76] which was strictly true. As for the licence of mortmain, Bond denied that it was of any relevance in the matter. Although he had denied that one had been obtained, he implicitly recognised its existence when he stated that 'forasmoche as the said John in his lyffe tyme dyd never lawfully assure any of his lands tenements or heredytaments accordynge to the purportes of the seid Lycence therfor the same lycence in mortmayne is nothynge materyall to this defendunt', and dismissed it completely.[77] In this he was again strictly correct, because the licence had never been used, as Trinity Guild had always refused to take possession of the lands. The lands had not been legally given to maintain the beadhouse, but had been used voluntarily for such purposes by John Bond and Thomas Bond the younger for a short time. However, there was an intent to use them for such a purpose, and that was what the corporation sought to prove, along with the fact that Bond had taken an oath to that effect.

The aforementioned commission was about its work between March and October 1549, and comprised John Hales, before his imprisonment, Henry Twyford, Baldwyn Porter, George Mathewe and John Hill. It examined a number of individuals present at the deathbed of John Bond, and others whose testimony had a bearing on the case. The first examination was carried out on 3 March, when Laurence Irelande of Lydgate, Lancashire, aged fifty five, appeared before the commission. He stated that John Bond had charged his son to perform truly his will and his grandfather's regarding the beadhouse, and that he had indeed

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76. ibid., f 13.

77. ibid., loc.cit.

taken a corporal oath upon a book to this effect before his uncle, Dr. Molyneaux, parson of Sefton, Lancashire, Robert Parkynson, a priest there, and Ralph Scott, curate of Sefton, in a room in the parsonage where John Bond had died.[78]

Irelande's wife Ellyn was examined on the same day. She was fifty-three years old, and had previously been married to John Bond. She stated that she heard the will of Thomas Bond the elder read out containing provision for a beadhouse, which was built by her then husband John Bond, who appointed certain of his father's lands to maintain it. She further stated that John Bond had made a feoffment to other persons of the lands by the advise of her brother Edmund Molyneaux, a sergeant at law, and that the deed was in the possession of her son Thomas Bond the younger. While she was married to John Bond the income from the lands was received by one John Porter of Coventry, appointed as receiver, and after him by John Tyler of Coventry, and after him by Thomas Amorsame of Coventry, which receivers paid to the ten poor men, woman and preacher such sums as were appointed to them by her father-in-law's will. Their account was made to her husband, and the overplus paid to him. After his decease, she herself took the account of Thomas Amorsame for a further five years or thereabouts, whereupon her son took over from her. She also deposed that he had taken a corporal oath upon a book at his father's deathbed to perform his will and his grandfather's in respect of the beadhouse.[79]

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78. CRO, Access. 54: Corporation Charities, Box I4, Doc. no. 28.

79. ibid., ff4 - 9.

The commissioners conducted their examinations according to a list of questions which they put to each person who appeared before them. One of their questions seems to have related to the disposal of any of the beadhouse's endowment lands, for Ellyn Irelande stated that her son had given her as her dower (presumably when she married Laurence Irelande) lands to the value of twenty marks that were a parcel of the lands and tenements given to maintain the beadhouse. She also stated that her son had sold to one Nicholas Freckleton, his heirs and assigns the farm and lordship of 'Luftone' in Warwickshire, of the yearly value of £5. So Bond had evidently been treating the beadhouse's lands as his own even before he consciously dissolved it. His father had done the same thing, but in this case Bond did not replace what he had taken.[80]

Next, the commissioners examined Robert Parkinson, priest of Sefton, Lancashire, who was sixty-five years old, and who appears as a witness to John Bond's will. He stated that he had been 'present and sawe and herde' Lawrence Ireland at the parsonage of Sefton administer a corporal oath to Thomas Bond to the effect that he would 'performe and fulfyll' the wills of Thomas Bond his grandfather and John Bond his father concerning the maintenance of the poor men, woman and preacher of the almshouse of Bablake at Coventry. He knew nothing more, however, in answer to the commissioners' other questions.[81]

On 12 October 1549 Thomas Amorsame of Coventry, aged sixty, the last receiver, was examined. His is the longest of the depositions,

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80. ibid., f 9.

81. ibid., ff 9 - 10

doubtless because he had considerable knowledge of the beadhouse's administration as receiver of the endowment lands. He deposed that he had read the will of Thomas Bond the elder, that John Bond had built an almshouse, 'otherwise a beadhouse', at Bablake, and that lands given by Thomas Bond the elder had been appointed by his son John to find and maintain the same. He had been appointed receiver of the lands before the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel in 1535, and had then been given a rental of the lands by the outgoing receiver, John Tyler. This rental was apparently the one referred to by the corporation in their complaint, because Amorsame said that it had originally been given to the mayor and aldermen by John Bond. Amorsame had taken the rents of the lands, worth £43 a year, and paid the sums to the poor men, woman and preacher from the time of his appointment until the month of September 1545, when he said that Thomas Bond the younger 'dyd expell and pute oute thys sayd deponent of the Receyte and medlyng wythe the sayd landes' within six years of the death of his father, appointing them to maintain the beadhouse 'after suche Rate and forme as yt hathe pleased hyme'. He related that Bond expelled one of the poor men, a certain Robert Hammond, and that he 'hathe Abryged and wythe drawyn as the sayd poore saye frome the Same yerely lyverye and moche of theyr fyer woode whyche they were wonte yerely to have before hys tyme'. Moreover, he 'hathe not payd the due wagys and stypende to the doctor Sherwoode preacher of the said howse and admytted by the sayd John Bond'. He also referred to the lands worth twenty marks a year belonging to the beadhouse that Bond gave to his mother when she married, and to the sale of the farm and lordship of 'Luftone' to Nicholas Freckleton. Amorsame's evidence related to the administration of the foundation rather than to anything

else, but he did state that he had heard that John Bond had charged his son to perform his will and his grandfather's, and that he had taken a corporal oath to this intent.[82]

The commissioners also examined two of the poor men of the beadhouse on 12 May 1549. They were Richard Davye, who was fifty-four, and one 'ffoulke', who was fifty-five. Davy said that he had been one of the 'almsmen' for the past twenty years, having been admitted to the beadhouse by John Bond, while 'ffoulke' had been an 'almsman' for the past fourteen years. Both made identical statements. They had received 7½d. a week, and the woman 10d. a week while the almshouse had been maintained by John Bond. Under his son, however, they had received only 7d. a week, because ½d. a week was taken by him to go towards the purchase of twenty loads of wood a year. Last year, however, they only received twelve loads of wood anyway, and the year before that fifteen. They were also supposed to have a new gown each year, but they had received only one over the past four years. As to the numbers of poor men maintained, they stated that there were at present eight poor men instead of ten, and that the other two places had been void for a year and since Michaelmas last.[83]

These two poor men stated that there was a preacher, and the last deposition taken was his. The preacher was one Baldwyn Norton, aged thirty three and above, who said he had been appointed to the office by Thomas Bond at Michaelmas 'next after' he had discharged Dr. Sherwood from the same post some four or five years previously.

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82. ibid., ff 12 - 19

83. ibid., ff 10 - 12

To begin with he had been sufficiently contented with his stipend, which had been paid regularly, amounting to twenty two marks a year, except that he had received only 40s. for the last year ending at the Annunciation of Our Lady. Bond had refused to pay him, 'alledging for hys excuse that thys deponent hathe not preached so many sermons as he ought'. Norton said he would have preached them 'yf he had not byne inhybyted therof and halted by the Kyngs generall instructions and inhybucyns'.[84]

The case between the corporation and Bond appears to have captured the interest of the citizens of Coventry. There are extant two copies of a document headed 'A Brief of the matter dependynge in the Chauncerye Betwene the Mayor Baylyffs and comenalte of the Cyte of Coventre, plaintiffs, and Thomas Bonde, Deffendant', which were summaries of the case to the point of the depositions being taken. The existence of more than one copy, and the probability that there were more, suggests that they were written and circulated about the city to afford some information as to the progress of the case. The documents contain details of the case to the point at which the depositions had been taken.[85]

There was some considerable delay between collecting the depositions and a judgement in the court of Chancery, however. On 23 April 1551, over six months after the commission had completed its work, the court had got only as far as issuing recognisances to the value of £1000 each binding the mayor, bailiffs and communalty and Bond to abide by the decision of the court. In the meantime Thomas Amorsame and William

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84. ibid., ff 20 -21.

85. CRO, Access. 54: Corporation Charities, Box I4, Doc. no. 30; 'Eld', unfol.

Wigston were to receive the rents of the beadhouse's endowment lands to maintain the eight poor men 'in suche sort as they weare accustomed to have in the lyff tyme of the ffather of the sayd defendent'. No attempt was to be made to fill the two vacancies, but if any of the existing eight were to die another was to be appointed in his place. The money to pay the preacher's stipend was to be kept back. It seems that it was assumed that the preacher had been dismissed, since Bond had not paid his wages, and another was not to be appointed. The court sought to maintain the beadhouse, etc., in exactly the state in which it was when the suit was brought before it. Bond was ordered not to sell or dispose of any of the lands belonging to the beadhouse, nor do anything else that might 'encombre the premysses'. The recognisance preserved the status quo.[86]

It was yet another year before a final judgement was passed in favour of the corporation and against Bond. On 7 March 1552 the court of Chancery ordered Bond to convey named lands worth £20 19s.9d. by 1 May next following to twenty four persons. These lands were to be 'free and discharged of all former bargeyns and Sales, and of all charges & incumbraunces whatsoever had made or doon by the said Defendant or by any other by hys Comandemente & procurement'. Bond was also required to surrender all 'Evidencys dedes Charters herytyngs and Munyments' concerning the lands to the corporation, as well as permit the rents and profits of the lands due at Michaelmas and Christmas last to be collected and put to the use of the hospital. The decree also ordered that all 'Accounts suyts quarrels Debts Duties and Demands' between the corporation and Bond should be settled before Pentecost.

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86. CRO, Access 54, 'Eld', f 22.

The judgement was not so hard as it might have been, however, for the corporation acquired less than half the value of the lands originally given by Thomas Bond the elder to endow his beadhouse. The decree directed that Bond, his heirs and assigns were to have the residue of his grandfather's lands, which meant all those not named in it, while those sales and leases he had already made were to stand. Perhaps he gained more out of the suit than did the corporation. The almshouse was now to be maintained with considerably fewer lands. The mayor and aldermen were to select the ten poor men from among those who had been inhabitants of Coventry for at least ten years, and who were 'of honest fame & behaviour & about the age of fourty years impotent and poore'. The weekly allowance, wood and clothing were to be met according to the will of Thomas Bond the elder.[87] The corporation had saved a much-needed institution, but one which was now poorly endowed.

Both these examples illustrate the lengths to which the corporation was prepared to go to salvage what it could of useful institutions. There was perhaps, some disappointment on the part of the corporation that in place of a much-needed hospital, as St. John's was, the city got only a school in return. Given the city's circumstances in the mid-1540s a hospital would have been more useful. Nevertheless, the corporation fought for a second school in the city, which would have been under its own control. So far as Bond's hospital was concerned, the corporation was determined to save it, and in successfully contesting Bond's action the city acquired a beadhouse which was now a secular, rather than a religious, foundation, though this was not necessarily the corporation's original intention, though there can be

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87. CRO, Access. 54: Corporation Charities, Box 15, Doc. no. 30.

little doubt that in the normal course of events it would have sought to acquire both Bond's and Ford's Hospitals after their dissolution. The taking over by the corporation of these institutions, stripped of their religious purpose, would have been a natural step in order to preserve them. In doing so they were secularised, and the relief of poverty passed from religious institutions into the hands of the corporation.

Following the 'secularisation' of Bond's and Ford's hospitals, bequests began to be made to them. In 1553 Ralph Hopkins bequeathed 'a doublet of Russett worsted & my second Jackett' to William Gold 'of the allmeshouse' without stating which one. Hopkins probably knew Gold personally, however, and this bequest should not be confused with general bequests for the upkeep of the almshouses, which first appear in 1558. This year Richard Arnwey gave 12d. 'to the bede men of Bablacke' and William Hindman provided for 6s.8d. to be given annually to each almshouse out of his lands.[88] Bequests were not made to these foundations when they were maintained as private bead-houses, doubtless because people felt that they would be contributing to the maintenance of masses and prayers for the souls of the founders and not themselves. Once the foundations ceased to be religious institutions and became secular ones testators felt more disposed to give money to support them.

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The impact of the Edwardian dissolutions upon poor relief was enormous. The guilds had been swept away, with all the provision that they provided for their poorer members. Even if it was not as

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88. LJRO, Hopkins, Ralph, 16/10/53; Arnwey, Richard, 4/10/58; Hindman, William, 1/3/97.

much as it had once been, it was still considerable. The chantries and all other endowments for masses and prayers were swept away, together with their provisions for alms. Only the grammar school maintained by Trinity Guild (about which we know very little, not least because the guild's surviving records are so fragmentary), Ford's hospital and Bond's hospital - this last only after considerable efforts on the part of the corporation - survived. The school was included in the 'continuance warrant' issued on 20 July 1548 by Sir Walter Mildmay and Robert Kelway, which also spared 31s.4d. from lands given for anniversary distributions to the poor. The total amount listed by the Edwardian chantry commissioners as having been given to the poor out of lands supporting endowments for masses and prayers was £8 9s.4d. The sum included in the warrant was therefore only 18%, or less than one fifth, and the commissioners' estimate was probably far below the actual figure. Ford's almshouse was also included in the warrant. This received an income of £8 15s. from lands formerly belonging to Pysford's chantry, of which the almshouse was deemed to be a part, to maintain six poor men and their wives. Moreover, the lands from which the school's and Ford's hospital's income were assigned remained in the Crown's hands until the corporation obtained them, along with many others belonging to the guilds and chantries in the city in 1552. Bond's hospital was mentioned in this grant, though only to exempt it and its lands from the grant. The suit between the corporation and the younger Bond in Chancery had been settled some six months before.[89]

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As well as the survival of institutions and provisions for

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89. A.F. Leach, English Schools at the Reformation, 1546 - 8, (1896), 245; E/301/53; CPR Edward VI, IV, 338, 341.

charitable purposes, there is the question of what proportion of the lands belonging to the dissolved institutions were given to new charitable endowments afterwards. Something has already been said of lands belonging to the cathedral priory in Coventry, the Hospital of St. John the Baptist and the monastery of Kenilworth in relation to King Henry VIII's school, but there were other lands given for charitable purposes besides these. The first was a collection of lands purchased by the corporation in 1542. In that year the corporation acquired a number of properties belonging to the cathedral priory in Coventry in the city and its suburbs, Coundon, Radford, Stoke and Sowe, as well as the house and site of the Greyfriars. There was very little tenemented property included in the purchase, most of it consisted of closes, crofts, fields and pastures, etc. The value of the lands was £77 12s.4d. a year before reprises, for which the corporation paid £1466 3s.8d., a purchase price of twenty years. The corporation's near state of bankruptcy precluded it from finding the money itself, however, which was given to them by Thomas White, later Sir Thomas White, a Merchant Tailor of London. A minute breakdown of the costs of the transactions is preserved in the Corporation Accounts, which shows that White originally gave only £1000 to purchase lands, and that the corporation scraped together the other £466 3s.4d. The purchase was transacted by Henry Over, who also took with him out of the common box of the city £20, a gold ring worth £5 8s., £400 'of the Cities goods in his owne hands & in Mr Warens hands' and £40 15s.8d. 'for a half yeires rent of the same lands purchased due at michellmas last sic. '. White eventually gave the corporation a further £400 to make up the difference.[90]

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90. LP, XVII, 556 (21); CRO, A 9, ff 10 - 13; See below, 409, and ibid., f 62.

White intended the income from the lands to be used as a loan fund for young men who had just completed their apprenticeships and needed capital in order to start up in business themselves; but this was not done straight away. Indeed, not until his death in 1567 were the lands assured to this purpose, and between the time of their purchase and White's death their income was largely at the disposal of the corporation of Coventry. The Corporation accounts for each year after the purchase contain an account of the lands delivered by Henry Over, which includes occasional payments made out of the revenues of the lands. Thus in 1546 £12 was given among twelve poor men, and a further £2 12s.1½d. 'to poore people more thene was gathered in the ward'. This distribution of £12 to the poor was made in subsequent years also, as the Corporation accounts show. Therefore, the remaining revenue from the lands went to the corporation to do with as it pleased, after making any necessary repairs and paying any charges incumbent upon them.[91] This could not have pleased the corporation more, since it provided much-needed money to pay for the day-to-day expenses of the city's administration. By the late 1530s the corporation was desperately short of money, and took to enclosing parcels of the common lands and leasing them out in order to generate extra income. In 1538 common lands to the yearly value of £18 18s.8d. were enclosed 'ffor the generall & comen paymentes which hereafter shal-be & ought to be payed by the Cominaltie of the said Citie'. This was followed in 1541 by the enclosing of further lands to the value of £13 1s.8d., bringing the total value of the lands enclosed to £32 4d. They reverted to common lands in 1548, when the ordinances of 1538 and 1541 were rescinded.[92] The income from White's lands quite

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91. CRO, A9,ff 41, 49, 70, *passim.*

92. LB, 729 - 37, 760 - 64, 788 - 89.

probably played a part in bringing this about.

On 6 July 1551 indentures were drawn up between the mayor, bailiffs and communalty of Coventry and the master and warden of the Merchant Tailors of London, which set down the uses to which White's lands were to be put after his death. Each year on 10 March, or within six days, 40s. was to be given to each of twelve poor men who were inhabitants of the city and no common beggars. Having received the money one year, they were prohibited from receiving it again for five years, 'unless it shall be as charitable to help them as to help other Persons'. Also on 10 March, or within three months of that date, £10 was to be delivered to each of four young men 'of good name and Thrift, who have been Apprentices in Coventry', in free loan for ten years, upon suitable sureties being presented. At the end of ten years the loans were to be returned in order that they could be given to another four young men, and so on every ten years for ever. At the end of the first period of ten years another loan was to be started. This entailed giving to two young men of Coventry 'of good Name and Condition' £20 each for ten years, suitable sureties being provided. At the end of ten years the monies were to be returned so that they could be loaned to another two young men, and so on for ever. When this fund had been operated in this way for ten years, yet another loan was to be established. One young man was to have £40 for ten years, the usual conditions and requirements applying.[93]

White's loan fund was not intended merely to serve Coventry, however, but the Midland towns and cities generally. Two years after the third loan fund had been introduced £40 was to be delivered to the

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93. Coventry Charities, 125-27.

mayor, bailiffs and communalty of Northampton, to be given to four young men of the town in like manner and form as the identical sum was to be given to four young men of Coventry. In the following year £40 was to be given to the mayor, bailiffs and communalty of Leicester, in the year following the same £40 to Nottingham and in the year following to Warwick - all for the same purpose. Then, in the thirty-sixth year after the death of White, a further £40 was to be given to four young men of Coventry for ten years, and then to four young men of Northampton, and so on to Leicester, Nottingham and Warwick. After one hundred years had elapsed, which meant that each town and city would have had the benefit of this additional sum twice, it was to be loaned to one individual in Coventry for ten years, and then be passed on in like manner from place to place for ever.[94]

Though White's loan fund was to serve all these towns and cities, Coventry was given control of it. The other towns and cities were to give sureties to Coventry to deliver the money according to White's directions. The mayor, bailiffs and communalty of Coventry were themselves answerable to the master and warden of the Merchant Tailors of London. Coventry benefited more than any of the others, because £24 each year was made available out of the lands for the poor of the city, and the lands themselves were in the corporation's control. It seems that any surplus rents from the lands went into the city treasury for the general benefit of Coventry. Indeed, White was a most generous benefactor of the city, thanks both to this loan fund and other sums of money which he had given at various times and for different purposes, even if his relations with the city were not always cordial.

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94. ibid., I27-28.

White died in 1567. So between 1542 and this year (some twenty five years) the bulk of the rents from the lands went straight into the city treasury for the every-day expenses incurred by the corporation. Despite White's extraordinary generosity in allowing it to take the rents of the lands for so long to its own use, the corporation procrastinated in paying his wife an annuity out of the lands for the term of her life when asked to do so by White in 1566. White wanted the corporation to pay his wife £46 out of the lands, which was part of her jointure for life, but was evidently refused. On 1 February 1566 he wrote again to the corporation asking them without delay to let his wife have at least £23 a year for life out of the lands. On 3 February following White wrote again to the corporation threatening to 'over cast my College[?]' if the annuity was not paid. The outcome is not known, but presumably the corporation complied with his wishes.[95]

The letter of 1 February is of especial significance, because it reveals the extent of White's generosity to Coventry. The relevant section is worth quoting in full. After he had requested yet again that the annuity be paid to his wife, White reminds the mayor and aldermen of the assistance he had given to the city: 'I truste that as you be worshipfull men soe you will consyder what gentilnes I have shewed to you & to your Cytye. ffirst wheras the parke was owte by lease I lent you CC^{li} to bye the lease unto your owne hands & dyd forbeare the same a great while, And by meanes of the sayd lease the parke ys nowe come wholly in to your owne hands, furthermore when you purchased the Chauntry lands you had of myne A M ^{li} or there aboutes to helpe you purchase with all, wich was a great furtheringe to your purchase, And

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95. CRO, Access. 17, two loose letters in an uncatalogued box; see also, CRO, A79/63E.

besydes this with money wich I gave you, you bought lands of Kyng Henry the Vlllth for certayne uses to the commodytye of your cytye wich you knowe Right well, wich lands be farr better in valewe at this daye than they were purchased for, as you Right well Knowe in manner dowble, you have had the lettynge of leases the sale of wood & all other comodytyes belongyng to the sayd lands for these XXI or XXII yeres or there abouts, I doo knowe y^{t} some leasys become into y^{e} hands by this tyme wich be IIII tymes more of valewe then they were purchased for, And of all these comodytyes comynge above the rents have I receved none but have sufferyd you to receve the benefytt from tyme to tyme for the love that I have born & shewed soe good will to you & your Cytye being Alwayes ready to fullfyll your Sutes & requests'. From this letter it is clear that all of the major purchases of lands made by the corporation in the last thirty years or so were paid for with money given to the city by White, despite which the corporation saw fit to treat him in an ungracious way.

In 1566 another collection of properties formerly belonging to the cathedral priory, the guilds and chantries in Coventry was given by Thomas Wheatley (alderman of the city) to provide poor relief for the needy, and support Bond's Hospital. By indentures dated 7 April this year he gave lands to the clear yearly value of £49. 11s., which money was to be distributed in poor alms with the residue going towards the maintenance of the hospital. The indentures provided for the distribution of 10s. each to twelve poor men of Coventry 'being house-holders in the said city' between 1 and 24 December each year by the mayor and aldermen, and 10s. each year to four poor men 'being house-holders' in the several parishes of Warwick, Rugby, Henley-in-Arden, Tamworth, Solihull and Nuneaton. The residue of the rents were to go to Bond's Hospital, but only so long as it continued. If it

decayed and ceased to continue, then the surplus was to be distributed among the most needy in Coventry.[96]

Fortunately, it is possible to trace with considerable detail the acquisition of the property by Wheatley over a number of years. The indentures included a list of the properties as follows: the manor of Little Packington in Warwickshire, the tenement and garden adjoining called 'the signe of the George' near Gosford Bars, two cottages and two crofts in the city, a tenement in Much Park Street, three tenements in West Orchard, a tenement in Cross Cheaping, eight tenements in Ironmonger Row on the east side, four tenements in Ironmonger Row on the west side, a tenement in Palmer's Lane, two tenements and two shops in the Bull Ring, a tenement in Fleet Street, a close called Cramp's Field in the county of the city, a close called 'the Little Condyte Field' and four selions of land lying in Shooter's Field in the county of the city and three closes lying near Barker's Butts in the county of the city. The scattered nature of the endowment lands undoubtedly reflects the piecemeal fashion in which Wheatley obtained the land over some eighteen years.

We can follow Wheatley's acquisition of the lands chronologically. The first to be obtained were two tenements in Ironmonger Row and the Bull Ring on 26 July 1549 from John Hales, who then held them with Sir Richard Morison in fee from John Combes and Richard Stansfield, since they were part of the collection of properties belonging to the cathedral priory and Kenilworth abbey obtained by the latter by Letters Patent of 28 July 1545. The two tenements had belonged to the cathedral priory. Wheatley had, with others, held the lease of these properties from the cathedral priory before the dissolution.

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96. Coventry Charities, 124.

On 7 April 1550 he obtained a messuage on the eastern side of Ironmonger Row from Richard Jackson of London, son of Richard Jackson of Coventry, but whether it had formerly belonged to the monastery and, if so, how Jackson obtained it, is not known. On the following 10 July Wheatley acquired more property from John Hales, comprising a further five cottages in Ironmonger Row, which Hales had had from Combes and Stansfield. It will be remembered that about this time Hales was selling his property in order to make ready money for his flight to the continent, or enfeoffing it to use to his friends and family. Like other men Wheatley was merely taking advantage of the opportunity which this presented. On 4 August 1552 he purchased another four tenements in Ironmonger Row, a gatehouse on the eastern side of the same and a little close on the south side of Well Street from Henry Over, part of a collection of lands which Over had inherited from Sir Richard Onley. This comprises all of the property which Wheatley acquired in Ironmonger Row for which records have survived.[97]

Most of the other properties given by Wheatley were purchased after this time. On 10 March 1556 he acquired a tenement in Much Park Street from Nicholas Rypton of Foleshill, which the latter had leased from the Trinity Guild of Atherstone, but when Rypton obtained the property himself is not known. On 4 November 1560 Wheatley purchased a barn with a close in Hill Street from Henry Over, another part of the property inherited by him from Sir Richard Onley, and certain selions in Shooter's Croft north of Hill Street, which Over held from Thomas Fisher and Thomas Dabrigecourt since 12 August 1549, they having purchased them from the Crown on 28 June 1549, being part of the lands formerly belonging to Marler's Chantry. At the same

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97. CRO, Access 101/138/17, 19, 18, 20.

time Wheatley also obtained from Over a close called 'le Conygrie' north of the city, which the latter held from William Mildmay of Chelmsford, Essex, and Thomas Nundes the elder of Springfield, Essex, since 8 February 1550, which they had obtained from the Crown on 1 February 1550, being formerly a part of the lands belonging to Percy's Chantry. By the following year, 1561, Wheatley had obtained the manor of Little Packington, which had formerly belonged to the cathedral priory. It had been granted to William Willington and William Sheldon in the first instance on 9 February 1544. At Easter time 1561 Wheatley made the final payment for the manor to Thomas Brome and his wife, but when they obtained it is not known. The last pieces of property to be obtained by Wheatley were a house, stables, a garden and two cottages in Gosford Street adjoining the bars, two crofts adjoining the two gardens, a field called the Pool Yard, with four pools and a garden lying on the site of the cathedral priory, and a farm and croft in Hill Street, all of which he purchased from Henry Over on 12 June 1562. This property had been purchased by Over and a certain William Phines from Richard Heywood, John Holzoy and Thomas Revel of London and John Wade of Coventry. The Pool Yard had originally been granted to John Combes and Richard Stansfield, but how it came into the possession of the above-mentioned four individuals and subsequently Henry Over is not known. Since this property belonged to the cathedral priory, presumably the rest did as well.[98]

The grants of lands by Sir Thomas White and Thomas Wheatley are

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98. ibid., 8, 9, 21; C 142/145/4 and DR/10/1900 a & b, CPR Edward VI, II, 343; C 142/145/4; CPR Edward VI, III, 220; LP, XIX, i, 141 (12); CRO, Access, 101/138/5; CRO, Access. 87/10; LP, XX, i, 1335 (51).

the only known examples of lands formerly belonging to the dissolved religious institutions being given to support the poor. Certain parcels of lands belonging to Trinity Guild and Corpus Christi Guild were given, amongst others, by Edward VI to endow the grammar school of King Edward VI at Nuneaton. These were land called 'le Morefeld', two parcels called 'Charterhouse leys' and 'Botomes Acre', in the tenure of Henry Over, which belonged to the former guild, and land called 'le Penyfeldis' and a croft belonging to the latter, and were given for the above purpose on 11 May 1552.[99] An insignificant amount of the property belonged to the religious houses, guilds and chantries, etc. in Coventry went to endow charitable works, therefore. Most of it remained in private hands, as has been discussed elswhere. Measuring the extent of provision for poor relief, education, etc., before the Reformation in Coventry, with the extent of provision afterwards, it is quite clear that much had been lost, and that no new provision was made before 1558.

A brief summation of the losses and gains would be as follows. Before the dissolution of any religious institutions, Coventry possessed two monasteries which provided some poor relief and facilities for the education of poor scholars. There were three hospitals, two of which were of recent foundation, and a school. The guilds provided considerable assistance to their poorer membors, while there were innumerable distributions to the poor linked to provisions for masses and prayers. As a result of the dissolutions, the charitable provisions of the religious houses disappeared altogether. Of the three hospitals, St. John's was dissolved, although, as a result, the city gained another school, in addition to the one already in existence, which

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99. CPR Edward VI, IV, 293.

was allowed to continue. But the city had a long struggle to establish that school and throughout the 1550s it ceased to exist. Of the other two hospitals, Bond's was nearly lost, and was recovered only after some effort on the part of the corporation after it had started to run down, while Ford's appears to have continued without interruption. As a result of the dissolution of intercessory institutions a large part of these two hospitals' endowments were stripped from them, which resulted in their decay at a later date, although they never ceased to function. The corporation also obtained the greater part of the lands belonging to the guilds, although it is not known if it thereafter provided for the poor of the city generally to the same extent as the guilds had for their poor brethren. As far as the many distributions to the poor associated with chantries, anniversary obits, etc., are concerned, they were all effectively swept away as a result of the dissolutions. Thus the period ended inauspiciously. It was not until Elizabeth's reign that there appeared any charitable foundations endowed with lands that had once belonged to institutions founded before the Reformation.

CHAPTER VII

The Citizens and the Clergy

The services of the clergy touched the lives of the inhabitants of Coventry, as elsewhere, at every point. The clergy gave a child a name and admitted him to membership of the Church, joined men and women in holy matrimony and performed the services which accompanied a person to the grave. They were also the keepers of men's consciences in their earthly existence, giving absolution to penitents for their sins, and offering prayers to protect them against the powers of evil and ease their passage to eternity. The pre-eminent service performed by the clergy was the mass, when the bread and wine were transubstantiated, and Christ and his self sacrifice made present upon the altar. The sacraments were the chief channels of grace open to the laity and only the clergy had the power to administer them. They therefore enjoyed a special position in the community, and the attitude and behaviour of the citizens towards them is of the utmost importance.

The bonds between the citizens and the clergy in Coventry went beyond the official ties of priest and parishioner. The clergy were in the deepest sense 'of' the people. Many of them were from Coventry families and served all their lives in the city. Thus Richard Tedde, a chantry priest in St. Michael's in 1522, was the son of John Tedde, a grasier of the city.[1] Thomas Hardwen, a priest in the city in 1510-11, was the son of John Hardwen, a draper and mayor in 1513.[2] John Sansom, the son of Alice Parkins by a previous marriage, was a priest

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1. LJRO, Tedde, John, ?/?/19; CRO, A6, f204; CRO, Access. 24, f 98.
2. PCC, 27 Ayloffe; He attended both dinners of Corpus Christi Guild in 1509, CRO, A 6, ff 172, 176.

in the city in 1511-13.[3] Henry Marler was a priest in Holy Trinity by 1505 until his death in 1538. He was a member of the large and important Marler family, which included Henry Marler, a grocer and mayor twice in 1482 and 1496, and his son Richard, also a grocer and also mayor in 1509. His exact relationship to these two individuals is not known, but the family connection was rewarding, for, when Richard Marler made his will in 1526, he appointed Henry priest of his chantry in Holy Trinity with a stipend of £6 a year.[4] Robert Abbots was a priest of St. Michael's in 1522 and lived with his mother in Gosford Street ward. He appears as witness to various wills between 1523 and 1539.[5] Thomas Hollys was a chantry priest of St. Michael's in 1522, perhaps of Mereton's chantry, which he held in 1547. His sister was married to William Recordyn, a prominent figure in Earl Street ward in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and warden in 1508, and sat on the city council once in 1509.[6] Thomas Grene was the Girdlers' priest by 1508 until at least 1521. His name appears as witness to various wills between 1510 and 1533. The Grenes were another large and important Coventry family. Robert Grene, a grocer, was mayor twice in 1494 and 1507. Humphrey Grene, a dyer, sheriff in 1508, bailiff in 1509 and thereafter until his death in 1516 a member of the city council made Thomas his executor.[7]

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3. LJRO, Parkins, Alice, ?/7/10, CRO, A 6, f 187.

4. He appears as witness to John Padlond's will, dated 1 July 1505, PCC, 41 Holgrave; CRO, Access. 24, f 99; His own will is extant, LJRO, Marler, Henry, 22/4/39; PCC, 15 Bennett; LB, 503, 581; PCC, F 20, Porch; LB, 624.

5. CRO, Access. 24 f 97, 12; PCC, 22 Bodfelde; LJRO, Edys, John, 1/7/39.

6. CRO, Access. 24, f 99; E/301/57, f 1; PCC, 32 Fetiplace; LB, 432, 535, 566, 619, 624.

7. CRO, A 6, ff 161, 248; PRO, 37 Bennett; LJRO, Heth, John, 31/7/33; LB, 553, 605; PCC, 22 Holder; LB, 623, 624, et. seq.

Thomas Elysden was a priest of Bablake in 1522, but by 1547 he was priest of Tate's chantry in St. Michael's. He was the son of George Elysden, a saddler of Coventry.[8] John Wigston was a priest of St. Michael's in 1522 and was the priest of Pysford's chantry in 1547. He was related to the Coventry and Leicester family of that name, although his relationship to any of its members is not known.[9] Richard Nethermyll was vicar of St. Michael's between 1532 and 1537. He was obviously related to this Coventry family, which included Julian Nethermyll, a wealthy draper and mayor in 1523, and his son John, sheriff in 1547, bailiff in 1548 and thereafter a regular member of the city council. Richard's exact relationship to them is not known.[10] William Wall was master of St. John's hospital between 1533 and the hospital's surrender to the Crown in 1545. His father was William Wall of Coventry, who appointed him executor of his will in 1532. His brother was John Wall, also of the city, who asked him to look after his wife after his death in 1551.[11]

Yet more Coventry families could count secular and regular clergy among their number although they did not serve in the city. Some seem to have served in the surrounding area, however. Roger Pysford, brother to William Pysford the elder, was parson of Baginton just to the south of the city.[12] William Bond was the youngest son of Thomas

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8. CRO, Access. 24, f 99; E/301/57, f 1; LJRO, Register of Wills, B/C/10.
9. CRO, Access. 24 f 97; E/301/57, f 1.
10. LJRO, B/A/1/14 ii, f 6; LP, XIII, i, 190 (53); LB, 684, 783, 788.
11. LP, XX, i, 140; LJRO, Wall, Henry, 25/7/34; Wall, John, 12/10/51.
12. W. Dugdale, **The Antiquities of Warwickshire**, (1656), 124.

Bond the elder. It is not known for certain if he had a living in the area, but his will of 1519 was proved locally suggesting that he probably did.[13] Henry Westley was the brother of William Westley, a capper and sheriff in 1547. Like Bond he seems to have had a living in the area, but not actually in the city. He appears as witness to several wills, and received a pension after the dissolution of the guilds and chantries, etc., but there is no evidence that he served in Coventry.[14] William Hopkins, a dyer and mayor in 1499, was cousin to the parson of Alveley, Staffordshire, which was apparently where he was born. He bequeathed £10 to his cousin to pay any debts owed by his parents in the area.[15] Thomas Enderby's son Richard was a priest. Enderby was a prominent figure in Earl Street ward, sheriff in 1543 and bailiff the following year. He bequeathed 40s. to his son by his will of 1545.[16] Nicholas Fitzherbert bequeathed 13s.4d. to Dame Fitzherbert, prioress of Pollesworth, in 1508, although their exact relationship is not known.[17] Roger Wigston was related to Margery Wigston, prioress of Pinley, although their exact relationship is not known.[18] Joan Marler, the second wife of Richard Marler, made her 'naturall sister' Agnes Smythe of the monastery of Syon, supervisor of her will in 1530,

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13. PCC, 22 Adeane; 20 Ayloffe.

14. LJRO, Westley, William, 28/11/58; He appears as witness to the will of Charles Bucke, another priest, in 1543, LJRO, 13/10/45; E/179/18/503, f 5.

15. PCC, 23 Moore.

16. LJRO, Enderbye, Thomas, 9/2/45; LB, 735, 769, 770, 773.

17. PCC, 10 Bennett.

18. S.T. Bindoff (ed.), The House of Commons 1509 - 1558, 3 vols. (1982).

and John Wood, her 'naturall sonne', of the same house, executor.[19] Robert Shirwood, a monk of the priory, came from a Coventry family, although the family has not been identified.[20] Similarly, Richard Barnacle, another monk and later subprior of the house, came from a family of Warwickshire.[21]

Besides family ties, there were bonds of friendship between the clergy and the citizens. These are reflected in the many bequests to clergy made by citizens in their wills.[22] A few multiple bequests suggest friendly relations between the testator and several clergy. The vast majority of bequests were to secular clergy. There are no surviving bequests to individually named regular clergy, and only one to a member of the higher clergy. In 1538 John Sele bequeathed 6s.8d. 'to the Reverent father in god John Suffragane to my lord off Chester'. A considerable number of testators appointed clergy as supervisors of their wills, while a few appointed them as executors.[23] There are a few representatives of the regular clergy. In 1501 John Hutton, gentleman, appointed the prior of Coventry, William Pollesworth, overseer of his will. In 1539 Nicholas Randell appointed 'Dr. Barnakell' as overseer, who was almost certainly Richard Barnacle, D.D., late subprior of Coventry. In 1541 Nicholas Heynes appointed Robert Sherwood, D.D., as his executor, who was also a former monk of Coventry. And there is one example of a testator appointing a member of the

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19. PCC, 2 Thower.

20. DNB.

21. See below, 452.

22. See Appendix, Table, 63.

23. See Appendix, Table, 64.

higher clergy as overseer. In 1510 Alice Parkins named Geoffrey Blythe, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield as overseer.[24] In the vast majority of cases, however, it was the secular clergy who were called upon to perform these services.

The citizens and the clergy often met in social circumstances, which undoubtedly did much to promote good relations between them. Both mixed on a day-to-day basis in the city. They also met on more specific occasions, such as craft dinners. The clergy, both regulars and seculars, were admitted to these fraternities. The Butchers accepted as new members in 1514/15 John Smith, guardian of Bablake and William Dolas, one of the priests there, as well as two other unnamed priests. In 1530/31 a 'ffrer Harris' of the Whitefriars became a member, and in 1534/35 William Wall, master of St. John hospital was accepted. Moreover, clergy from outside Coventry also joined the crafts: in 1514/15 William Deakins, prior of Maxstoke, was made a brother of the craft of Butchers. The Weavers' accounts present a similar story. This craft's accounts for 1533 list receipts of fines from 'fader Westley' of Bablake, for 1536 fines from the master of St. John's, William Wall, from the prior of Arbury, the prior of Coventry, Thomas Weyford, and a priest of Astley. The extent to which these clergy, especially the heads of monasteries, attended these crafts' dinners is not known, but they undoubtedly did attend at times, for otherwise there was little point in joining such fraternities.[25]

Perhaps the major forum were the enormous dinners held by the

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24. PCC, 28 Holgrave; LJRO, Randall, Nicholas, 17/2/39; PCC, 5 Spert; LJRO, Parkins, Alice, ?/?/10; Sele, John, 19/2/38.

25. Butchers, Reader, c 7, 85; Weavers, CRO, Access. 100/17/1, f 14, 17.

religious guilds on several occasions during the year, which were attended by large numbers of clergy, not only of the city, but from all over Warwickshire and further afield. Although the clergy of the city attended, these gatherings are of special note because of the large numbers of 'foreign' clergy, both regular and secular, from all over Warwickshire, the Midlands and sometimes much further afield. These occasions provided the opportunity for the inhabitants of Coventry to broaden their contact and forge links with the clergy at large. Few records of Trinity Guild survive, however, but fortunately the lists of those who attended the two annual dinners of Corpus Christi Guild, the Lenten and Venison dinners, have survived complete between the late 1480s and the early 1520s, when the dinner declined. They show that clerical membership was considerable.[26]

Looking at the membership of the regular clergy first, as well as the heads of the priory and Charterhouse, we see that the dinners of this guild were regularly attended by successive heads of the Warwickshire monasteries: Stoneleigh, Kenilworth, Combe, Merevale, Maxstoke, Arbury, Warwick, and the nunneries of Pinley, Pollesworth and Nuneaton. This is perhaps to be expected, since they were within easy travelling distance from Coventry. The heads of houses from the larger Midlands region are found with less regularity because the distances involved made frequent attendance difficult, but many attended at one time or another when they were able. From Northamptonshire came the heads of Fineshade, Sulby, Chacombe, Canons Ashby, Pipwell, Daventry and Catesby nunnery, from Leicestershire those of Leicester and Garendon, from Staffordshire those of Dieulacres, Tutbury and Sandwell, from Worcestershire those of Pershore, Bordesley, Halesowen and Evesham,

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26. CRO, AG.

from Gloucestershire those of Hailes and Winchcombe, and from Oxfordshire those of Abingdon and Thame. Occasionally, a guild dinner was attended by the head of a religious house from further afield, such as those of Reading, or Newnham and Bushmead in Bedfordshire, Lilleshall (Salop), Wigmore and St. Albans in Hertfordshire, Combermere in Cheshire and on one occasion Waverley in Surrey.

Ordinary choirmonks and nuns seldom attended any of the guild's dinners, though there are instances when they can be found in the lists. William Barber, canon of Newark, Northamptonshire, attended both dinners in 1490. In 1496 William Derby, canon of the same house, attended the Venison dinner. The following year Elizabeth Hazelrigg, subprior, Christian Topcliff, Elizabeth Snell and Alice Henson, nuns of Nuneaton attended the Lenten dinner while William Compton, a monk of Tewkesbury, and Thomas Branch, cellarer of Gloucester, attended the Venison dinner. Henry Ruthe, a canon of Kenilworth, attended the Venison dinner in 1498. John Lenche, Edmund Ashby and Thomas Cheltnam, monks of Winchcombe, attended the Venison dinner in 1503. Thomas Barwell, a monk of Combe, attended both guild dinners in 1505. John Beley, a monk of Bordesley, was also present at the Lenten dinner. Walter Wylmer, canon of Warwick, attended the Lenten dinner in 1516 and 1520.[27]

The secular clergy were well represented. Throughout the lists are to be found the priests of St. Michael's and Holy Trinity, both religious guilds, the crafts, the chantries and St. John's hospital. From the county of the city and Warwickshire came the vicars of Stoke and Foleshill and priests of Shilton and Exhall, vicars of Allesley,

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27. ibid., ff 21, 23, 72, 77, 80, 90, 137, 142, 144, 213, 239.

Hancotter, Wappenbury, Weston-under-Weatherley, Wormleighton, Ryton, as well as priests of the same church, Radford Semele, Leamington, Offchurch, Stoneleigh, Bulkington, Wolvey, Warwick, Coleshill, Tettenhall, Frankton, Dunchurch, Withybrooke, Packington, Kenilworth, Meriden, Greenborough, Ladbroke, the dean and vicar of Astley college, the warden and priests of the college of Knowle, priests of Warwick and the parson of Arley. From further afield came the vicars of Swynford, Newark, the parson and other priests of Kirby and a priest of Nailstone, Leicestershire, the vicars of Ravensthorpe and the parsons of Welford and Crick in Northamptonshire, the parson of Bewdley and a priest of Brewood in Staffordshire, the 'vycar of the Close' in Lichfield, the parson of Comberton, Cambridgeshire, the parson of St. Peter's in Bristol and a priest of Stony Stratford.

The foregoing indicates the extensive network of connections with the regular and secular clergy which Coventry possessed, but it does not necessarily convey an adequate impression of the clerical presence at a dinner. The list of all the clergy who attended the Lenten dinner of Corpus Christi Guild in 1521 makes the point. It names John Webb, prior of Coventry, William Wall, abbot of Kenilworth, Oliver Adams, abbot of Combe, Robert Sutton, abbot of Stoneleigh, Henry Beeley, abbot of Tewkesbury, William Tailor, abbot of Hailsowen, William Clement, prior of Arbury, Nicholas Smyth, prior of Bushmead, Robert Sherwood, D.D., Humphrey Boler, priest of Bablake, William Nylner, parish priest of Holy Trinity, Roger Jonyns, priest of Rowley, Thomas Grene, the Girdlers priest, John Wellys, the Drapers' priest, Roger Walker, the priest of the Jesus Mass in St. Michael's, Ralph Oreall, vicar of Exhall, Richard Shuckborough, Nicholas Wykes and Laurence Hill, priests of Holy

Trinity, and Thomas Smith, parson of Comberton.[28] There were twenty in all. This was a normal clerical attendance at a Lenten dinner. The Venison dinner was only slightly less well attended.

Whatever the personal relations between the citizens and the clergy, there was little doubt that the former exercised a great deal of control over the latter in the discharge of their duties. Practically all the clergy in the city were under the control of the citizens, since they were hired, and 'fired', by individuals or institutions, such as the two religious guilds, of which Holy Trinity was probably the largest single employer of clergy in the city, and the craft guilds and the fraternities. Trinity Guild drew up minutely detailed ordinances governing the duties of their priests, but the only ones to survive date from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century. The priests were to be honest and chaste and pray for the brethren and sisters and benefactors of the guild. They were to keep the canonical hours every day. They were to celebrate certain masses every day as well, including a mass of the Holy Trinity, Our Lady, St. John the Baptist and St. Katherine, and a requiem mass, as well as any others they might be called on to say. Then after compline each day five candles were to be burnt before the altar of Our Lady and the Salve Regina was to be sung before it. Any priest employed by the guild who refused to serve as he had sworn to do, or who accepted other preferment or service without the permission of the guild was to be discharged without delay.[29] Nothing is known of the specific duties of Corpus Christi Guild clergy, nor of the crafts.

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28. Ibid., ff 248 - 51

29. C. Templeman (ed.), The Records of the Guild of Holy Trinity, St. Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Katherine of Coventry, (Dugdale Society, xix, 1944), 175 -78; Dugdale, op.cit., 191-92.

When a testator made provision for a priest to say masses and prayers for his soul he sometimes gave details about the terms of employment. For example, when Richard Marler founded his chantry in Holy Trinity in 1526, he left instructions concerning the disposition of the priest who would serve it. He was to be 'of good and prestly conversaton and demenure'. If he was subsequently found to be wanting,' after monition and reasonable warnyng to hym yeven the seyed preste be not reconcilled then he to be amoved and another to be put in his sayed Rome'. Moreover, Marler instructed that the priest's stipend of 9 marks was to be paid quarterly, which provided a measure of control over him. Despite Marler's business-like approach to his chantry, he did not forget his family obligations, and appointed Henry Marler priest. When William Pysford the elder established his chantry in 1517 he also required that the priest appointed to it should be 'a man of good name and fame and of honest conversacion', although he did not follow Marler in the payment of his stipend.[30]

Whether they were setting up a full-blown chantry of the type established by Pysford and Marler or just an obit, the citizens of Coventry often sought to include the corporation in their supervision. Marler entrusted the appointment of the priest of his chantry to the city wardens, but only 'by thassent of Maister Mayer and vi of his brethern'. Many other testators entrusted the city wardens with the performance of their obits, and many more included the mayor in their supervision. Frequently, testators provided a small sum for the mayor to make an offering at their obit, partly because it added to the splendour of the occasion, but mainly to see that the obit was kept. Some testators made it clear that this was the purpose of such

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30. PCC, f 20 Porch, 9 Ayloffe.

provision. In 1530 Thomas Waren gave 20d. to the mayor 'to oversee this my will kept and perfourmed without any diminucion'. In 1546 John Lawton bequeathed 20d. to the mayor each year for six years, 'willing him to offer at my solle mase & to se by obbet be well & truly kept for the space of vi yeres'. In 1540 Isabel Wade involved not only the mayor but one of the aldermen in seeing that a trental was kept each year for her soul. The mayor, 'wyth won of his mooste auncyent brethern beynge Aldermen', was to see the trental performed and offer a penny at the last mass, for which each received 12d. Testators also entrusted their obits to the crafts and the religious guilds, either by giving them the endowment lands or by requesting them to attend their obits in the manner of the mayor. Even when testators committed the performance of their obits to the crafts and religious guilds they sometimes asked the mayor to attend them. In 1518 John Haddon entrusted the Drapers with the performance of his obit, but he gave 3s.4d. to the mayor, 'to be at my dirge and masse and to see this myn obitte kepte'. William Pysford the elder requested Trinity Guild to keep an obit for him every year. He involved not only the mayor, however, but also some of his officers in supervising its performance. He gave 20d. to the mayor, 6d. to the steward to read his will at the obit and 4d. to the swordbearer 'forto call upon the same to be doon'.[31] This seems to have been common practice throughout the country.[32]

Most of the secular clergy in Coventry, comprising stipendiary priests maintained by the parish churches, the guild priests, craft

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31. PCC, f 20 Porch; 25 Jankyn; LJRO, Lawton, John, 27/4/47; PCC, 27 Alenger; 17 Ayloffe; 9 Ayloffe.

32. See K.L. Wood-Legh, Perpetual Chantries in Britain, (CUP, 1965), Chapter VII, 'Chantries and the Towns'.

priests, those of St. John's hospital, as well as those hired by private individuals to say masses and prayers for their souls and chantry priests, received stipends between £5 and £6 a year. A few priests received higher stipends. Corpus Christi accounts show that the guild paid its priests 8mks. (£5 6s.8d.) a year, and from surviving records of Trinity Guild it appears that this guild's priests received the same. From bequests for stipendiary priests in the wills it is clear that 8 marks was the usual wages for a priest maintained to say masses and prayers for the souls of private individuals. The priests of St. John's hospital also received this amount. Craft priests appear to have done slightly better. From surviving craft accounts it seems they received on average £6.[33] Similarly, chantry priests appear to have been paid £6. When William Pysford the elder and Richard Marler provided for chantry priests in 1517 and 1526, both allowed for stipends of £6.[34] But chantry priests and stipendiary priests founded in perpetuity, who still only received 8 marks, could find themselves in a poorer position than the others. Their stipends were drawn from the rents of endowment lands, which at the time of foundation were sufficient to maintain the priest and the lands in a good state of repair, but during the sixteenth century, as we have seen, the endowment lands of a number of chantries had decayed to the point where they could no longer support a priest, whereupon they were combined with another decayed living, the holder of which continued to pray for the souls of the founders.[35] Some priests could find

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33. CRO, Access. 24, ff 97 -100; CRO, A 6, passim.; Drapers, CRO, Access. 154 (Daffern); passim: Weavers, CRO, 100/17/1, passim. Cappers' accounts, f 87, passim.

34. PCC, f 20 Porch; 9 Ayloffe.

35. See above, 262-65.

themselves receiving considerably less than the £6 on average it was intended they should have, therefore. By comparison the curates of St. Michael's and Holy Trinity received £8 each. These wage levels remained constant throughout the period 1485 to 1547, and all the clergy would have experienced a drop in their real value. The city entered a period of steep economic decline from the late 1520s and early 1530s, which was coupled with the effects of inflation upon what was in practice a fixed income.

There were great differences in the personal wealth of the clergy. The Musters certificates of 1522 not only list the stipends of each secular priest, but also the value of their goods, which shows that sometimes the less well paid were worth more than their higher salaried fellows. For example, Richard Shirley was the curate of St. Michael's at this time, receiving a stipend of £8 a year. He was worth 20 marks in goods. Yet Thomas Grene, the Girdlers' priest, who received for his stipend £6 13s.4d. was worth £18 in goods. Similarly, Roger Couche, another stipendiary of the same church, received 8 marks a year, yet he was worth in goods £16. Other stipendiaries were worth several pounds. For example John Wigston received a stipend of £6 and yet was worth £8. Thomas Morres received a stipend of 8 marks and was worth £7 7s. William Baillie received a stipend of £6 and owned goods worth 8 marks. John Wells, the Drapers' priest, received £5 13s.4d. in wages and was worth £5. William Daniel and Henry Ince both received 8 marks a year and both possessed goods to the value of £4. Robert Abbots received a stipend of 8 marks and was worth 5 marks. Roger Walker received £5 13s.4d. and was worth £3. The remaining priests of St. Michael's were worth between 30s. and 40s. in goods. Some of the chantry priests of St. Michael's were apparently the most

wealthy. For example, Richard Tukke was priest of a chantry worth 14 marks (£9 6s.8d.), and was worth £20 in goods. Thomas Bird was priest of a chantry worth but £5, yet he was also worth £20 in goods. A similar picture emerges from the returns for Holy Trinity, although the priests of this church were generally poorer. William Milner, curate, was paid £8 a year and was worth 5 marks in goods. Christopher Ive and John Illage were both stipendiary priests receiving 8 marks a year, but both were worth £10 in goods. The rest of the clergy owned goods valued between 20s. and 40s.[36]

The disparities in wealth are perhaps accounted for by the fact that many of the clergy supplemented their incomes in a variety of ways. They were often called upon to say extra masses. Testators requested large numbers of priests at their obits and, especially from the late 1530s, at their funerals, for which each priest was normally paid 4d. Others were called upon to perform trentals, for which the usual reward was 10s. There are no actual examples of priests receiving more than one stipend at a time, but it is not unlikely that this did occur. Some had private sources of income. The wills show some owned property at their deaths. Thomas Bird, who has already been mentioned as being worth the considerable sum of £20 in goods, in his will of 1524 disposed of lands and tenements in Shilton and Corley worth yearly £2 12s., which he gave to maintain an obit in perpetuity and in other ways for the health of his soul. Henry Queenborough, priest of Percy's chantry in Holy Trinity in 1547, owned the house he lived in in Greyfriars lane. By his will of 1558 he gave it to his brother's son and heirs so long as they maintained an obit in perpetuity for his soul. At least one priest seems to have been a money-

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36. CRO, Access. 24, ff 97 - 99.

lender. William Baillie, a priest of St. Michael's, made the following bequests in 1542: 'I gyve to Olyver fforest 10s. & forgyve hym that he owyth me' and 'I forgyve Rafe Page sum debtis as be betwyxte hym & me'. Many of the clergy received gifts of money and in kind from the citizens, which could be substantial, and a popular priest could do very well.[37]

Both vicarages were valuable livings for their incumbents. The Valor gave the value of St. Michael's as £50, out of which there was paid annually £2 15s.4d. to the archdeacon of Coventry for procurations and synodals, a pension of £5 to the prior of Coventry and £1 13s.4d. to the dean and chapter of Lichfield, there remaining clear £41 11s.4d. The value of Holy Trinity was given as £25 5s.6d., out of which 16s. was paid to the archdeacon of Coventry for procurations and synodals, a pension of £5 to the prior of Coventry and 20s. to the churchwardens of Holy Trinity for the vicar's house, there remaining clear £18 4s. In addition, both vicars had to provide and pay the wages of a curate to serve their parishes, which, if the stipends of the curates listed in the Musters' certificates of 1522 are used, meant that St. Michael's was worth £33 11s.4d. to its vicar and Holy Trinity £10 4s.[38]

Assuming that the valuations made by the commissioners of the Valor were correct at the time, the value of the vicarage of Holy Trinity declined over the next ten years. Subsequently inserted in the returns of the Valor is another valuation of this vicarage made in 1546. On 16 August that year a commission from the king was issued to the mayor, John Harford, Simon Parker and Thomas Wheatley, to be

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37. LJRO, Bird, Thomas, 30/5/25; Queenborough, William, 3/10/58; Baillie, William, 16/10/43.

38. Valor, 58

returned by 28 August following. They found the vicarage to be worth £21 2s.4d. The same charges, but apparently excepting the rent of the house, amounted to £5 16s., leaving clear £15 6s.4d.[39] After the vicar had paid the stipend of a curate there remained but £7 6s.4d. to the vicar. The reasons for this subsequent valuation are not known. The explanation for the decline in the vicarage's value probably lies in the declining economic fortunes of Coventry at this time. If Holy Trinity declined in value it is reasonable to assume that St. Michael's did also.

The income of the vicars was directly related to the payment of tithes. Personal tithes of the profits from trade and industry formed a sizeable proportion of that income, and when the citizens were themselves affected by the decline in the city's trade and industry their ability to pay was reduced. When gathering personal tithes the vicars must have relied upon the honesty and goodwill of the merchant and manufacturer, who presumably, would have been quick to point out that he could not afford as much as he once had. It was for the vicar to believe him or not. Evidence of tithe disputes in the city is sadly lacking. There are records of only two cases in the period 1485 to 1558, one in 1543, the other in 1558, both of which concern Holy Trinity.[40]

The vast majority of testators bequeathed sums of money for tithes 'forgotten' or 'omitted'.[41] Sometimes quite large payments

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39. ibid., 59.

40. LJRO, B/C/5.

41. See Appendix, Tables, 5, 18.

are made, and this raises an important issue. If these payments were in respect of long-standing and deliberate evasion rather than simply recent omission they would suggest that relations between the citizens and the clergy were perhaps not so cordial as we have been suggesting. On balance, however, it seems more likely that they do not represent any intended evasion. If we are to believe that many people rarely paid their tithes, it is difficult to see how the vicars of St. Michael's and Holy Trinity survived or why there was not a never-ending series of law-suits for non-payment, initiated by the interested parties - vicars, rectors (who included the priory) and tithe-farmers. In fact, as we have said, only two such suits have been found. It is dangerous to dogmatize; but the likelihood seems to be that these death bed payments were for recent omission - perhaps sometimes resulting from the testator's illhealth.

Bequests for unpaid tithes declined in value as the period progressed. Before the late 1520s and early 1530s sums of 40s. were occasionally given. 20s. was slightly more frequent and 10s. was not uncommon, but the vast majority of bequests were below this sum, a matter of a few shillings at most. After this time the recorded amounts bequeathed declined in value. Even the more wealthy were not giving as much as they had done. But the decline is also explained by the increase in the number of surviving wills of quite poor testators. That there is only one bequest between 1532 and 1538 for forgotten tithes is perhaps explained by the fact that almost all the surviving wills belonged to poorer testators.

The standards of education among the regular and secular clergy in Coventry varied enormously, from those with little formal education

to university graduates, a few of whose academic careers had taken them on to doctorates of divinity, perhaps with some time spent at a foreign university. Our evidence of the regular clergy is confined to the monks of the priory, and is taken mainly from the visitation records of 1518, 1521 and 1524. The 1518 visitation noted that Richard Barnacle was '_in sacra theologia bachallarius_'. A student of the University of Oxford, Barnacle had been admitted to the degree only the previous year. In later sources, such as the pension lists of the monks after the dissolution of the house and a dispute in Chancery some time later, he is described as a doctor of divinity, but no confirmation of this can be found in the register. Barnacle was ordained deacon on 17 March 1505, priest on 6 June the following year and by the time of the Dissolution was subprior of the house.[42] The most notable of the monks of the priory was Robert Shirwood, however, a native of Coventry. The 1521 visitation records state that Thomas Leeke said that there were three scholars of the house abroad at the time besides Shirwood, '_in gravem oneracionem domus_'. Shirwood visited several foreign universities, among them Louvain, where in 1519 he filled for a month the place of the Hebrew lecturer who had temporarily vacated the post. While he was abroad Shirwood wrote an exegetical work entitled '_Ecclesiastes Latine ad veritatem Hebraicam recognitus, cum nonnullis annotationibus Chaldaicis et quorumdam sententiis_', published in Antwerp in 1523, which he dedicated to John Webbe, prior of Coventry 1517-1527.[43] Shirwood would have spent

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42. P. Heath (ed.), _Bishop Geoffrey Blythe's Visitations c 1515-1525_. (Collections for a History of Staffordshire, 4th series, vii, 1973), 18; E/314/77; LJRO, B/A/1/14ii, unfoliated.

43. Heath, _op.cit._, 86; _DNB_.

little time in England, let alone Coventry, although we have already seen that he was there occasionally. The last example is Thomas Weyford, who was recorded by the visitation of 1524 to be '_scholaris in partibus ultramarinis_'. He was ordained subdeacon on 2 June 1520 and priest on 23 September 1525. The date of his diaconate is not known. His name does not appear among the inmates at the 1531 visitation, and it is likely that he was one of the four students then at a university. Weyford was at Louvain university in 1523. He eventually returned to Coventry to become prior in 1527, a post which he held until his death in 1537.[44]

More is known about the educational achievements of the secular clergy, especially the vicars of the two parish churches. Undoubtedly, because of the size of the livings, St. Michael's and Holy Trinity attracted some well-educated and even distinguished individuals. James Preston, vicar of St. Michael's from 1488 to his death in 1507, was a doctor of divinity of Oxford university. He was also a prebendary of Hemingborough, Yorkshire. His successor was John Veysey, a doctor of both laws, who was vicar from 1507 until 1519, when he was appointed as bishop of Exeter. Veysey was a pluralist of some note: while vicar of St. Michael's he was archdeacon of Chester (1499-1515), dean of Exeter (1509 until his appointment as bishop), dean of the royal chapel (from 1514), canon and prebendary of St. Stephen's, Westminster (1515-1519), dean of Windsor (1515-1519), dean of Wolverhampton (1516-1521) and rector of Meiford, Montgomeryshire, by the king's presentation from 1518. Veysey's successor was George Grey, a bachelor of canon law,

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44. Heath, _op.cit._, 119 ; LJRO, B/A/1/14ii, unfoliated; H. DeVocht, 'Excerpts from the Registers of Louvain University from 1485-1527,' _EHR_, xxxvii, (1922), 104.

who was the brother of Thomas, the second marquis of Dorset. He was vicar from 1520 to c1532. Richard Nethermyll, also a bachelor of canon law was vicar of St. Michael's by 1534 to 1537, when he was succeeded by Arthur Dudley, one of the king's chaplains, who was quickly succeeded by John Ramridge, a doctor of divinity, in 1538 until the end of Edward VI's reign. While vicar of St. Michael's he also held the rectory of Hockliffe, Bedfordshire (1541-1559).[45]

The vicars of Holy Trinity follow a similar pattern. Thomas Bowde, vicar by 1499 until his death in 1508, was a bachelor of theology of Cambridge university. He was also a canon and prebendary of St. Georges's chapel, Windsor between 1491 and 1504 and dean of Tamworth from 1504. His successor was Thomas Orton, a doctor of canon law, vicar between 1508 and his death in late 1524, early 1525. He was another notable pluralist, being vicar of Priors Hardwick, Warwickshire (from 1501 until death), canon of Lichfield and prebendary of Ufton Cantoris (1510-1522) and prebendary of Stotfield, Lichfield (1522 until death). Nicholas Darrington was vicar of Holy Trinity between 1527 and his death c1542, who was a master of arts and a bachelor of divinity.[46]

Such highly qualified clergy were, potentially at least, of

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45. A.B. Emden (ed.), A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to 1501, 3 Vols., (Oxford, 1957-59); DNB; J. Foster (ed.), Alumni Oxoniensis The Members of the University of Oxford 1500-1714, 4 vols. (1891/2); A.B. Emden (ed.), A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford, AD 1501-1540, (Oxford 1974), 414; LP, XIII, i, 190 (53); Emden, AD 1501-1540, 472 - 73.

46. Emden, to 1501; ibid.; J. A. Venn (ed.), Alumni Cantabrigiensis A Biographical List of all known students Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge from the earliest time to 1900 Part 1 From the earliest time to 1751 4 vols. (1922-27).

great benefit to their parishioners, but that depended upon whether they were resident. James Preston was certainly a resident. He witnessed several wills during his incumbency and was made supervisor of others. He regularly attended the dinners of Corpus Christi Guild, even though, as we shall see, he was allegedly an active member of the Lollard sect within the city! His own will was written in Coventry, which is further evidence of his residence. John Veysey was almost certainly an absentee. He was a considerable pluralist, owning several livings scattered around the country. He is a good example of that graduate clergy whose university training enabled them to obtain administrative or legal posts in ecclesiastical or royal government, and who rarely visited their parishes. Veysey's links with Coventry were apparently slight. He witnessed none of the surviving wills during his incumbency, although this is not positive evidence on its own of absenteeism (for many of the vicars of both parish churches, even though they were resident, did not). His attendance of the dinners of Corpus Christi Guild were occasional, however, there being only four times in his incumbency when he was present. George Grey was apparently a non-resident also. There is nothing to indicate he was ever resident. He does not appear as witness to any wills during his incumbency. He does appear as a member of Corpus Christi Guild, but the guild's dinners appear to have ceased about the time he was appointed (because of the declining fortunes of the guild), so this source cannot be used after this time. As for Richard Nethermyll, despite his family ties with the city, he does not appear to have been a pluralist, which may suggest that he was resident in his apparently only living. He does not appear as witness to any wills, but this does not necessarily mean anything. John Ramridge was another vicar who was certainly resident.

He appears as witness to several wills, and was, it seems, in dispute with some of his parishioners because of his apparently open support for the papacy.[47]

Similarly, Holy Trinity had a mixture of resident and absentee vicars. Thomas Bowde appears to have been resident, although there is not a great deal of evidence to support this. He does not appear as witness to any surviving wills. He did attend the dinners of Corpus Christi Guild with some regularity, however. Bowde was also a benefactor of his church. He was the founder of Jesus Hall, that building attached to the south-side of Holy Trinity which housed the priests of the church. He had purchased the land from Thomas, the first Marquis of Dorset, in 1499, and subsequently had the hall built. By his will, which was also written in Coventry, he bequeathed the hall to the church in return for masses and prayers for his soul. Thomas Orton was also resident during his incumbency. He does not appear as witness to any wills, although he was made executor of John Sparrow's will in 1510. He regularly attended the dinners, sometimes both of them, of Corpus Christi Guild during his time as vicar of Holy Trinity. Moreover, in 1512 he was one of three doctors and two bachelors of canon law who condemned Joanna Washingbury, a Lollard, to the stake as a relapsed heretic at the end of a major persecution in the city. In 1515 he sat in judgement of another of his parishoners accused of Lollard heresy. It is not clear if Nicholas Barrington was resident or not. He may have been on and off, for he appears as a witness to

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47. Henry Botcler, PCC, 30, Milles ; John Smyth, 29 Milles; 12 Vox; Richard Stanwardyne, 19 Moore; William Rowley, 5 Adeane; CRO, A 6, f 12, et. seq., PCC, 22 Adeane. CRO, A 6, ff 161; et. seq., ibid., 277. PCC, 1 Alenger; See below, 506-13.

the will of Julian Nettermyll in 1539, but he was probably more interested in advancing himself under the patronage of the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, Geoffrey Blythe. P. Heath writes, 'It may not be too fanciful to see in Darvngton a talented boy from an episcopal manor [Wynbunbury, Cheshire] who was carefully nursed and launched upon a promising career by the bishop'. Darrington had accompanied Blythe to the university of Louvain in 1522-3, and he preached several sermons during Blythe's visitation of the diocese in 1524. He was named by Blythe as one of his executors in 1530.[48]

A few of the secular clergy in the city were also graduates, or had at least spent some time at university without (apparently) obtaining a degree. John Frisby, who resigned as priest of Copston's chantry in 1487, and Richard Leyland, who resigned as priest of Allesley's chantry in 1491, were each described as sacrae theologie professor in the institution registers. Thomas Clements, a priest of St. Michael's from about 1501 to 1511, was described as a master of arts in Thomas Bickley's will of 1505, but there is no confirmation from the university registers. John Harris, who was appointed to Allesley's chantry in 1525, is described as a master of arts also. Anthony Molineaux was warden of Copston's chantry between 1528 and 1536. He was a bachelor of theology at the time of his appointment, and became a doctor of divinity while still chantry priest in 1532.

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48. [illegible], A 6, f 1, et. seq.; T. Sharpe, Illustrative Papers in the History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry . . . . (Birmingham, 1871), 117 - 18; PCC, 34 Adeane. PCC, 36 Bennett; [illegible], A 6, ff 166, et. seq., LJRO, B/C/13, f 100; Heath op.cit., xv; LP, III, ii, 2052, 2204, 2390; Heath op.cit., 115 et. seq.; PCC, 14 Thower.

William Wall, master of St. John's hospital between 1533 and 1545, was a master of arts. Simon Bellister, curate of St. Michael's from about 1539 to 1544 was a master of arts. And Thomas Sherwyn, headmaster of the school founded by John Hales in 1545, although not a priest, was a bachelor of arts.[49]

Education for most of the clergy who wanted it came from local schools and teachers. Both the priory and the Charterhouse ran schools for poor scholars and Trinity Guild ran a grammar school. The extent to which the clergy in Coventry availed themselves of these is not known. It would be wrong to assume that the clergy made no effort to educate themselves, however, either at these schools or any others, as the following bequest shows. In 1546 John Lawton bequeathed 6s.8d. to Henry Hibbert, the curate of St. Michael's, 'to pray for my Solle & to helpe hym towarts his lerning'. This priest was trying to improve his education, therefore, but the most notable thing, perhaps, is that he was being encouraged by one of his parishioners.[50]

Literary activity among the clergy, as shown by their possession of books, is another indication of their education. An examination of the books owned by the clergy in Coventry reveals an overall predominance of the old with a sprinkling of the new. The sources are the wills and inventories of some of the clergy of Coventry. Some do not specify the books. For example, Robert Morres, who made his will in 1540, possessed books worth 16d., according to his inventory.

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49. LJRO, B/A/1/13, ff 34, 126; PCC, 4 Adeane; LJRO, B/A/1/13, f 11; Emden, AD 1501 - 1540, 397, 602, 46, 515.

50. LJRO, Lawton, John, 27/4/47.

The books were not named, however. Usually the books are named if they are bequeathed in wills. Thus in 1494 John Webster, probably a priest of St. John's hospital, disposed of a copy of Jacob de Voragine's Legenda Aurea, a copy of Jacob Januensis' Sermones Dominicales and several psalters and breviaries. Thomas Bowde, vicar of Holy Trinity, bequeathed only one book, which he called his 'Antiphonis Magnis'. James Preston possessed several books: among his bequests were 'libros meos scolasticos', a book of sermons by Jacobus Januensis, probably his Sermones Dominicales, a printed Bible with a commentary of Nicholas of Lyra, the fourteenth-century scholar of Paris who anticipated the Christian humanists in his insistance on the literal interpretation of the Bible, and 'librum Catholicon de bona impressione'. One of the most striking collections of books was that owned by Thomas Mylner, curate of Holy Trinity between about 1516 until his death in 1530. He bequeathed in his will 'A book named hampole', possibly a copy of Richard Rolle's mystical work Fire of Love, 'my second snuples [sic?]', a Bible with a concordance and 'all Eramus works'. This latter bequest is one of the most significant of all bequests of books, showing that the works of this leading Christian humanist had found their way to Coventry.[51]

A significant proportion of the clergy at Coventry were well educated, therefore, but there is still the question of what effect this had upon the religious life of the city. Well educated clergy are only of significance if they apply their education in the course of their duties. There is very little evidence of preaching in the city, but the friars were the most commonly involved. We have already seen the effects of a Franciscan's inflammatory sermon in the late

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51. LJRO, Morres, Robert, 2/5/41; PCC, 17 Vox; 34 Adeane, 22 Adeane; LJRO, ?/?/30.

fifteenth or early sixteenth century. On those occasions when Sir Henry Willoughby of Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire, visited the city when a friar was preaching, he would reward him with a generous sum of money. Thus in June 1522 he gave the friar 3s.4d. The friars were also encouraged by Thomas Brademeadowe in 1493. It will be remembered that by his will he established a foundation for the Grey-friars to appoint a 'sufficient clerk' each year to preach a sermon on All Souls' Day in St. Michael's.[52]

There are two examples of foundations which provided for preachers and stipulated that they should be graduates. When he founded his beadhouse in 1506 Thomas Bond the elder instructed that the priest of the house was to 'occupy hymself and gyff diligently to preaching the word of god and of his holy gospells' on at least forty occasions during the year. He further directed that the priest who was appointed was to be a doctor of divinity or a bachelor of divinity or 'a maister of arte at the lest'. So Bond appreciated the benefits which a graduate clergy could bestow. Bond was a devout Catholic, as his will clearly shows. Like others of his kind he simply wanted to promote good preaching in his city. Some twenty four years later, in 1530, Thomas Waren provided for three sermons to be said each year forever. He instructed that the vicar of Holy Trinity, with 'thadvice and assent of Thaldermen of the said parish', was to appoint three graduates 'or substancial clerks' to preach a sermon in Holy Trinity on the following three days: the Sunday before the feast of St.Thomas

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52. See above,188-91; W.H. Stevenson (ed.), Report on the Manuscripts of Lord Middleton Preserved at Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire, (Historical Manuscripts Commission, Cd 5567, HMSO, 1971), 343; See above, 73.

the Apostle and the two Sundays immediately following. Each was to receive 6s.8d. immediately after completing their sermon. The bells of the church were to be rung to inform the people that the sermons were about to be preached. As his will shows, Waren was an old-fashioned Catholic. Perhaps his (and Bond's) concern for good preaching reflects anxiety about the presence of heterodoxy in the city.[53]

Even so preaching before the Reformation was more concerned with morally uplifting stories than doctrinal instruction. Most sermons were allegorical interpretations of the Scriptures or the naive accounts of miracles and the lives of saints drawn from that favourite source book; The Golden Legend. The content of some was intellectually and spiritually more superior, and concentrated more directly on Scripture, but only rarely so.[54] It was this latter form which almost certainly Bond, and probably Waren, were after when they stipulated that their sermons were to be delivered by graduates, but graduates who were thoroughly orthodox.

It is not clear if the parishioners appreciated or needed a well-educated priest, whose key role remained mediatory rather than expository. The sacrifice of the mass was the cornerstone of a priest's duties, and while preaching and other forms of instruction were probably more widely used than is often thought, the priest was judged primarily on his discharging of this central duty.[55] Certainly, this appears

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53. PCC, 22 Adeane; 25 Jankyn.

54. J.W. Blench, Preaching in England in the late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries. (Oxford, 1964), I-37.

55. Felicity Heal, 'Economic Problems of the Clergy' in Felicity Heal and Rosemary O'Day (eds.) Church and Society in England: Henry VIII to James 1. (1977), 106.

to have been the case at Coventry, where the citizens made strenuous efforts to maintain and increase the level of masses celebrated in the city each day. Some indication of the importance of maintaining the number of masses in the city has already been given. It takes on its full significance against the decline in the number of priests in the city.

Sources for the numbers of clergy in Coventry are few and far between, but it seems that numbers were steadily declining from at least the last quarter of the fifteenth century to the end of Henry VIII's reign. The numbers of the regular clergy are the most difficult to establish, because, with the exception of the priory, the only available figures are those from about the time of the Dissolution. In the priory's case, however, there are also figures from a few surviving visitation records. At its foundation the house was intended to accommodate an abbot and twenty four monks. There were twenty six monks in 1478; a prior, fourteen monks and two novices in 1496; a prior, sixteen monks and six novices in 1518; a prior fourteen monks and four novices in 1521; and a prior, sixteen monks, including one who was abroad, and four novices in 1524. The prior and eleven monks signed the surrender in 1539, but there were in fact fifteen monks all told at this time. Pensions were subsequently awarded to the prior and nine monks, comprising eight who had signed the surrender and three others whose names do not appear on that document, making a total of fifteen.[56] The Charterhouse was built for a prior and twelve monks, and a charterhouse was so constructed, with individual cells, as to be unable to accommodate more than a

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56. Heath, op.cit., 169, 15-17, 85-7, 115-17; LP, XIV, i, 69; E/314/77.

specific number. The 1536 visitation found that the house was up to strength, in addition to which there were three lay brothers. The prior and seven monks signed the surrender, but the prior and nine monks were awarded pensions while that of a tenth monk, Richard Wall, was withheld in circumstances which have already been discussed.[57] All we know about the size of the two friaries in Coventry comes from their surrender documents. Greyfriars' was signed by eleven of the house and Whitefriars' by fourteen.[58] At the time of the dissolution of the religious houses in Coventry, therefore, there were fifty five regular clergy in the city.

The earliest source for the numbers of secular clergy in the city are the Musters certificates of 1522. These include a survey of all priests in both parishes. According to the certificates, the priests of St. Michael's church comprised the vicar, the curate, six chantry priests and seventeen others, while those of Holy Trinity church comprised the vicar, the curate, two chantry priests and ten others. Included among the latter numbers were the craft priests and other stipendiary priests.[59] For example, Robert Abbots, listed among the priests of St. Michael's church, was the Mercers' priest from at least 1518 to 1525. John Wells, also of St. Michael's, was the Drapers' priest from at least 1519 until his death in 1538. Roger Walker was the Jesus Mass priest in the same church from at least 1521 to 1523.[60] The certificates seem to be a fairly accurate survey of the clergy of

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57. E/36/154/60; LP, XIV, i, 73; See above, 250.

58. LP, XIII, ii, 503, 539.

59. CRO, Access. 24, ff 97 - 9.

60. CRO, A 6, ff 227, 265, 233, 248, 258; Drapers, CRO, Access. 154 (Daffern), f 3 et. seq.

the two parish churches, with the exception of the chantry priests of Holy Trinity. The two priests recorded by the commissioners served the same chantry, probably Percy's which was for this number: 'Sir William Hyx & Sir Simon ------ (blank) have oon Chantrie whyich is worth to theme yerlie £12'. This chantry survived until 1547. Another chantry which did this was Allesley's, and so, presumably, it was in existence in 1522, but there is no mention of the priest who served it. There may have been other omissions of chantry priests from either church, but the endowment lands of many were so decayed that they were unable to support a priest and had been merged with other decayed livings, whose incumbents continued to pray for the founders.

Over the next eleven years the numbers of clergy in the parish churches declined substantially. The clerical subsidy of 1533 lists the vicar and fourteen other priests of St. Michael's, an overall loss since 1522 of nine priests, and the vicar and eight other priests of Holy Trinity, an overall loss of four priests.[61] Included in the numbers for Holy Trinity must be the priest of Marler's chantry, founded in 1526, which only serves to emphasize the decline which had taken place in the past eleven years. There may be several reasons why this decline took place. The uniting of decayed chantry livings with others has already been mentioned, and this seems to account for some of the decrease. In 1529, for example, the endowment lands of Cellet's chantry in Holy Trinity was given to the living of the vicar of Stoke, and other chantries, two in St. Michael's and another in Holy Trinity were treated in the same way before the compilation of the Valor in 1535.[62] There is no indication that any of the crafts had dismissed

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61. Sharpe, op. cit., 5, 72.

62. See above, 263-64.

their priests by this time. The surviving accounts of those crafts which maintained priests (Cappers, Drapers and Weavers) show that they still maintained their priests at this time. Another possibility is that fewer people were hiring priests to say masses and prayers for the health of their souls, though, as we have seen, testators continued to make provision up to this time.

There are no other sources for the numbers of priests maintained in the parish churches except for the chantry certificates, which list only the chantry priests, of course. According to the Valor, the number of chantry priests in St. Michael's in 1535, was four, and in Holy Trinity four also. The Musters certificates list a priest of a chantry in the cathedral, probably Copston's, among the priests of St. Michael's. The Valor lists this chantry and one other, Leicester's, served by two priests, which gives another three chantry priests in 1535, making eleven altogether in the city. Copston's was transferred to St. Michael's after the dissolution of the monastries, but Leicester's disappeared. Both the Henrician and Edwardian chantry certificates list all the above chantries and their priests, with the exception of Leicester's.[63]

A similar picture of decline in the number of priests is found in the accounts of the two religious guilds. Trinity Guild was founded to maintain thirteen priests, including a warden. The Musters certificates of 1522 list a warden and eight priests. It seems that the guild managed to maintain this number until 1547, for when John Leland visited the city in the late 1530s to early 1540s he recorded that, 'In this Colledge is nowe a Maister and 8 Ministers'. The Henrician

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63. Valor, 59 - 60; CRO, Access. 24, ff 98, 99; E/30/57, E/301/31.

chantry certificates also list eight priests and a warden in 1545. The number of priests maintained by Corpus Christi Guild can fortunately be followed closely through the guild's accounts book. The guild was originally established to maintain five priests, which it did up to 1525. Thereafter, until 1540 it maintained four, and from this year until it was dissolved three.[64]

The number of priests maintained by St. John's hospital is difficult to trace. The Musters certificates list a master, three priests, three clerks and five sisters in 1522. The Valor states that three priests were maintained by the hospital in 1535. Presumably, this number does not include the master of the hospital, but the three clerks and five sisters are not mentioned. There is no further detail available. The surrender of the hospital ten years later in 1545 was signed by only the master and one of the priests, but there is no reason to believe that these were all who remained by this time. The surrender documents of the religious houses should be sufficient warning that not all the inmates of a house always signed the deed of surrender.[65]

The decline in the number of priests in the city meant that the number of masses said daily also decreased. We have already seen how individual citizens took the initiative in attempting to sustain the level of mass-saying in the city through their bequests.[66] The corporation also took steps to combat the problem, when, in 1492, it ordered that all crafts and mysteries which maintained priests to sing

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64. CRO, Access, 24, f 99; Lucy Toulmin Smith (ed.), The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the years 1535 - 1543. 5 vols., (1964), II, 107; E 301/31; CRO, A6, ff 261, 325.

65. CRO, Access. 24 f 97; Valor, 53; LP, XX, i, 307.

66. See above, 191-93.

and pray for their members were to 'gyf straitly in charge to their seid pristes to kepe the quer dayly as-well vppon the werk daies as vppon the holy daies in encreasyng of dyuyn seruice dayly to be songon in the parish Chirches of this Cite'.[67] Increasing the workload of existing priests could only be a temporary expedient however.

It is not clear if the chantry priests were similarly instructed to assist in the daily singing of mass in the parish churches. Certainly, those individuals who founded chantries during the period left their own instructions that they were to do so. William Pysford the elder left instructions in his will of 1517 that the priest of his chantry was 'to have sumwhat more insight in Synging that the comen hath, that he may the better help the divine service in the quere to the which divine service in saint mighells Church my will and mynde is to have hym bounden'. In 1526 Richard Marler expected the priest of his chantry in Holy Trinity to do the same, and seems to have been following common practice in doing so. He ordered that the priest was 'to kepe devyne service in the quere as other prests doo theyre'.[68]

The problem steadily worsened, however, and by the 1540s had become acute. In the mid-1540s a scheme was drawn up 'first for the sure avauncement of gods honor And secundarilie for the welthe of this our natural Citie', which tackled, amongst other things, the problem of declining numbers of priests in the city. It attacked the fact that 'dyuers & vayne thyngs rather for pleasure then otherwise been still continued & maynteyned for that the comen charges therof nothyng dymynysshed', in what turned out to be a reference to the Corpus Christi Day pageants. The pageants, 'beyng thyngs of pleasure in

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67. LB, 544 - 45.

68. PCC, F 20 Porch, 9 Ayloffe.

this tyme were to be sett aside & that the charge therof considered may be nygh well soeffard in this tyme to be left & set aside as shalbe for this yere ommytted & all felyshypes of all occupations exonerated of the charge therof'. The crafts were not freed of the charges altogether, however, for it was suggested that instead each should contribute a sum to support three priests newly appointed to the churches in the city, 'for thextollyng of gods honor & the Augmentation of dyvyne service', in place of maintaining their pageants on Corpus Christi Day. The priests were to be appointed to St. Michael's, Holy Trinity and 'the lait white freers churche'. The Mercers and Drapers were to contribute £4 each, the Weavers £2 13s.4d., the Girdlers £2 10s., the Smiths and Shearmen and Tailors £2, the Whittawers 26s.8d., the Cappers 20s., the Coopers 16s.8d., the Card-makers and Saddlers 10s. and the Barbers 6s.8d.[69]

The sentiments which the scheme expresses suggests that it was the idea of someone like William Cotton, a reformist mayor of the late 1530s. But there is some question as to whether it was ever put into effect. It exists in what is evidently a rough draft form: there are many crossings out, insertions and other corrections, indicating clearly that it is still at the planning stage. It does not appear among the leet ordinances about this time, which it would surely have done had it been adopted. Moreover, from the surviving accounts of those crafts which supported pageants on Corpus Christi Day it is clear that there was no interruption in their performance during the 1540s.

But if the scheme as a whole was not put into effect, certainly

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69. SBT/GHC, DR 10/1858.

a part of it was. It seems that the three priests were appointed. There are bequests in two surviving wills from 1544 to a priest of the Whitefriars church. Robert Smyth bequeathed 12d. 'to the pore preste of the White freers', and John Moyle requested a trental for his soul and all christian souls, directing in his will that 'the pore prest at ye Whytt ffrears doo syng hit because his wagis is but smalle'. The city acquired at least one more much-needed priest even if the rest of the scheme was scrapped.[70]

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The dissolution of the monasteries and later the guilds and chantries resulted in many religious and secular clergy being made redundant. There was a total of fifty-five religious dispossessed as a result of the former, and a total of twenty-three chantry, obit and stipendiary priests dispossessed as a result of the latter. It is not possible to establish what happened to more than a few of them, and in a large proportion of even these cases the suggestion can only be tentative. Identification is the major problem in respect of the regular clergy, often the name they bear in religious life was not the name they bore in the world. However,this has not proved to be a problem with the monks and friars of Coventry. In most cases the names they used appear to have been their real ones. Even if we have the real names of the clergy, it is difficult in some cases to be sure that we have identified the right person, especially if he had a common surname. A more positive identification can be made of individuals with unusual surnames. Despite this problem, the general impression is that many of the dispossessed clergy remained in Coventry and the

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70. LJRO, Smyth, Robert, 23/3/44, Moyle, John, 13/10/44.

surrounding area. Many were from local families anyway in the city or Warwickshire and it is natural that they should have returned to them at least immediately after the dissolutions.

The fortunes of only a handful of religious can be traced with any certainty. Richard Barnacle, the subprior of the priory, remained in the city or the surrounding area. He was from a Warwickshire family anyway, which explains why he stayed. He appears as witness to Nicholas Randall's will dated 3 December 1539, and was also involved in a lawsuit for the recovery of some property in Eathorpe, Warwickshire, which he inherited from his parents.[71] Robert Sherwood, a monk of the same house, and a native of Coventry, remained in the area. He was appointed overseer of the will of Nicholas Heynes dated 11 October 1541.[72] William Foster, another monk of the priory, also seems to have remained in the area, becoming involved in a lawsuit for the recovery of money lent to a servant of the priory when he was still a monk.[73] Thomas Leatherbarrow, a Carthusian monk, appears to have remained in Coventry until his death in 1557. The will of a Thomas Leatherbarrow has survived, dated 18 December 1557, in which he describes himself as a 'priest in Coventre'. No other priests with these names are known to have been in the city at any time.[74]

Other religious who remained in the city became chantry, obit or stipendiary priests We come across them in pension lists after the dissolutions of 1547. For instance, William Abell, a monk of the

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71. LJRO, Randall, Nicholas, 17/2/39; See below, 454-55

72. PCC, 5 Spert.

73. See above, 455.

74. LP, XIV, i, 161; LJRO, Leatherbarrow, Thomas, 7/2/57.

Charterhouse, seems to have secured for himself the position of chaplain to Elizabeth Swillington, widow of Ralph Swillington, recorder of Coventry 1515 - 1525. Another chaplain was Robert Walker, presumably the former Franciscan friar of this name in the Coventry house.[75] Abell secured the position of the stipendiary priest which Elizabeth Swillington provided for in her will, for he is named as such in the Edwardian chantry certificates. Walker appears to have secured appointment in 1541 as one of two chantry priests serving Percy's chantry in Holy Trinity (with William Queenborough, who is also mentioned as being a third chaplain to widow Swillington).[76] Thomas Corbeyn, another monk of the Charterhouse, appears as priest to the Shearmen and Tailors' chantry in St. Michael's in 1547. He remained in Coventry until his death in 1552. William Madder, a Carmelite friar, was, it seems, hired by Trinity Guild after the dissolution. He is listed with four other priests of the guild in the pension lists.[77]

Some of those ex-religious who could secure appointments as chantry and stipendiary priests found themselves well-off. They had not only their pension, but also the stipend from the chantry they served. Thus William Abell received a pension of £6 when the Charterhouse was suppressed, and received another £6 as Elizabeth Swillington's stipendiary priest. He did not enjoy the benefits of his double income for long, however. The Edwardian chantry certificates note that he died shortly after Easter 1548. Thomas Corbeyn received a pension of £5 6s.8d.

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75. LP, XIV, i, 161; PCC, 26 Alen; E/301/57, f 2. Dugdale, op.cit., 184; PCC, 26 Alen.

76. LJRO, B/A/14 ii, f 18, E/301/57, f 2.

77. LP, XIV, i, 161; E/301/57, f 1; LJRO, Corbeyn, Thomas, 14/9/52: Dugdale, op.cit., 186; E 301/57, f 1.

when the Charterhouse was suppressed, and received a further £3 18s.6d. while serving the chantry. He found himself in the enviable position of receiving a second pension after the Edwardian dissolutions of £3 7s.1d., giving him a yearly income of £8 13s.9d. Few would have been as fortunate as Corbeyn. The friars were dismissed without pensions at all, and many probably never secured further employment as chantry and stipendiary priests. Walker and Madder were two of the more fortunate ones. Many would doubtless have had to rely upon their families to support them.[78]

Some of the ex-religious doubtless found it difficult to adjust to the outside world after being institutionalised for so long. Moreover, they also found themselves vulnerable. Though Richard Barnacle was dismissed from the priory with only his pension, he had the comfort of additional income from some property. However, he found himself embroiled in a Chancery suit to recover the property, at Eathorpe in Warwickshire, because his nephew had seized it and would not return it. In his complaint Barnacle alleged that one messuage, two closes and 'A yarde Lande', which by right of inheritance should have come to him from his parents Richard Barnacle and Anne Westley, had been entered and withheld from him by the son of his younger brother and one John Westley. His problem was that they held 'divers Charter escryps and mynaments' relating to the property, which showed his right to it, but, of course, they would not surrender them to him. His nephew obviously denied Barnacle's claim, asserting that his mother had given the lands to her younger son William, his heirs and assigns, after whose death they passed to him as his father's heir.

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78. LP, XIV, i, 161; E/301/53, f 3; LP, loc. cit.; E 301/57, f I.

He further claimed that the 'evidencs dedes and wrythings' he had proved his claim to the property and not his uncle's, which were in the possession of John Westley for safe keeping. The outcome of the suit is not known, however. The case suggests that his nephew and John Westley had taken advantage of his being a monk to obtain the property for themselves.[79]

A more clear-cut case is that of William Foster, also a monk of the priory, who saved part of his stipend to supplement his pension, but was defrauded of what he had saved by one of the servants of the priory shortly before the dissolution of the house. After the dissolution of the house Foster took out a suit in Chancery against the servant, John Hill, for the return of the money, which amounted to the large sum of £10. Hill denied Foster's allegations, but he seems to have been guilty. This is suggested by the fact that he sought to settle the matter out of court. Foster stated in his reply to Hill's answer that 'the sayd defendent before substancyall persons hath granted to paye £4 unto youer sayd orator so that he myght be dyscharged ageynst youer seyd orator for the demmaund of the resydue of the seyd £10'. It appears that Foster refused. The outcome of the case is not known, but it is to be expected that the court eventually found in Foster's favour, and Hill was ordered to repay the whole amount.[80]

Not all the ex-religious remained in Coventry or the surrounding area, of course. Those who did not are the most difficult to trace. The fate of one such monk of the Charterhouse is known, however,

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79. C/1/950, ff 5 - 6.

80. C/1/988, ff 21 - 22.

although his identity is somewhat obscure. Before the re-foundation of Sheen Charterhouse in 1556-57 ex-Carthusian monks had gathered together in the Savoy Palace. One of their number died and the prospective prior of Sheen, Maurice Chauncy, wrote to the headquarters of the order for a replacement. A certain 'Richards' was sent from a Dutch Charterhouse, apparently one of the monks of the Charterhouse at Coventry who had fled the country at the dissolution. It has not been possible to identify him, however. He was by this time well advanced in years, just over a month after arriving in England, long enough to see Sheen refounded, he died.[81]

There is also some evidence of ex-religious from other houses coming to Coventry after the surrender of their house. For example, William Billisbye, a canon of Leicester, came to his cousin Thomas Gregory at Stivichall, where he remained until his death in 1545. Another monk, Robert Furber, of the monastery of Combermere in Cheshire came to Coventry also. What his connection was with the city is not known: he apparently did not have any family in the city. He lived there only a short time, however, before dying in 1541. No doubt some of the ex-religious of Coventry moved about the country in the same way, but their movements can be traced only through local records of other towns and cities.[82]

Many of the secular clergy remained in Coventry after the Edwardian dissolutions. Their presence can be traced through wills, where they appear, either as witnesses and supervisors or as benefactors.

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81. E. Margaret Thompson, 'A History of The Somerset Carthusians', (1895), 185.

82. SBT/GHC, OR 10/2055; LJRO, Bellesbe, William, 13/10/45; Furber, Robert, 9/9/45.

Thus in 1556 Richard Shewell bequeathed William Mathew, priest of Preston's chantry in St. Michael's, two tenements and a garden in Coventry for life, which were to revert to the donor's sons on his death. He appears as a witness to a will in 1558.[83] Thomas Elysden, the priest of Tate's chantry in the same church, appears as witness to wills in 1557.[84] Thomas Barnes, the priest of Allesley's chantry in Holy Trinity, appears as witness to several wills throughout Edward's and Mary's reigns, the last time in 1558.[85] William Queenborough, priest of Percy's chantry, remained in the city until his death in 1558.[86] Thomas Browne, a stipendiary priest of St. Michael's received a bequest of 5s. from Thomas Morres in 1551, and he appears as witness to a will in 1553. He disappears after this time, and does not appear in the taxation of clergy of Coventry and Lichfield diocese in 1555. He might have moved out of the area or possibly had died: by 1553 he would have been forty six.[87] John Bateman, another stipendiary priest of St. Michael's was witness to several wills until 1549. Like Browne he does not appear in the taxation of the clergy of the diocese in 1555. His disappearance after this time is probably explained by his death. His career can be traced back to 1522, when he was a stipendiary priest of Holy Trinity, and in 1549 he would have been fifty nine.[88] Rowland

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83. E/301/57, f 1; LJRO, Shewell, Richard, 4/5/57; Bate, Thomas, 4/10/58.

84. E/301/57, f 1; LJRO, Warde, John, 11/10/57; Deades, Joan, 10/7/57.

85. E/301/57, f 1; LJRO, English, Simon, 17/4/53; Underwood, William, 8/9/48; Harvye, Elizabeth, 14/1/52; Tully, Richard, 28/11/58.

86. E/301/57 f 2; LJRO, Queenborough, William, 3/10/58,

87. E/301/57 f 2; LJRO, Morres, Thomas, 9/7/51; Sparks, John, 17/4/53.

88. E/301/57, f 2; LJRO, Shaw, William, 17/10/47; Rogers, Nicholas, 14/10/49; CRO, Access. 24, f 99.

Gosnell, a priest of Trinity Guild, does not appear in any of the Edwardian wills, but he was witness to several wills between 1556 and 1558.[89] John Farmer, a priest of Corpus Christi Guild, witnessed several wills in Edward VI's reign until 1552 when he would have been fifty five. He had been a priest in the city since about 1534, when he first appears as witness to a will. He was not listed among the clergy of the diocese taxed in 1555, but it is not known if he had died or moved away by this time.[90] The last priest who is known to have stayed in the city is Thomas Jorden or Horden, also a priest of Corpus Christi Guild. He did not witness any wills in Edward's reign, but reappears in Mary's between 1554 and 1557.[91] Richard Branker, who was priest of Marler's chantry, remained in the city for a while it seems. In 1550 John Strong bequeathed to him his 'wolsted Jakyt'. He does not appear as witness to any wills in Edward's or Mary's reigns, however. In 1554 he was presented to the vicarage of Corley to the north of Coventry.[92]

Several other priests were still receiving their pensions in 1555. These included Richard Edmunds, lately priest of Copston's chantry, William Wright, John Simons and Roger Stoneley, all formerly priests of Trinity Guild, and John Carrington, who had been a priest of Corpus Christi Guild. It is not known how many remained in the city, however. There are two priests, Thomas Hollys, priest of Mereton's chantry in St. Michael's and John Wigston, priest of Pysford's chantry in the same

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89. E/301/57, f 1; LJRO, Goodryche, Edward, 4/5/57; Tully, Richard, 28/11/58.

90. E/301/57, f 1; LJRO, Gilbard, James, 13/10/50, Somerfield, John, 17/10/52; Bedyll, Katherine, 21/1/34.

91. E/301/57, f 1; LJRO, Hunt, John, 29/4/55; Yardley, John, 7/2/57.

92. E/301/57, f 2; LJRO, Strong, John, 13/10/50; Dugdale, op. cit.

church, who also do not appear among the clergy taxed in 1555. However, Hollys was eighty in 1547 and Wigston was sixty. Both began their careers in Coventry in the late 1510s or early 1520s. Both were almost certainly dead by the time of the taxation.[93]

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Of crucial importance to the advance of Protestantism was the emergence of a Protestant clergy, but in 1547 only one member of the clergy in Coventry can be identified as such. He was William Benet, vicar of Holy Trinity. However, Benet had been appointed only a few months before Henry VIII's death, on 5 November 1546. An Oxford graduate with a master of arts degree, he had previously been vicar of St. Nicholas' in Warwick. He was also rector of Lighthorne, Warwickshire, between 1541 and 1548. Benet was resident in Coventry throughout his incumbency, which ended with the accession of Mary, when he was deprived of the living for being married. His presence in the city is attested to by the fact that there are a large number of wills which he witnessed. There is little evidence that he made progress in converting his parishioners to Protestantism, but there exist two letters, all that remains of a much larger correspondence, between him and one of his Catholic parishioners whom he tried, unsuccessfully, to convert to the new religion. As we shall see, the parishioner chose to attend a church more in keeping with his own beliefs. He may not have had to go far to find such a church, perhaps only across the way to St. Michael's.[94]

Benet's opposite number at St. Michael's was John Ramridge, who

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93. E/301/57, f 1-2; E/179/18/503.

94. Emden, AD 1501 - 1540, 43; LJRO, Walton, Ralph, 29/7/51; Wall, John, 12/10/51; Fann, Alice, 16/10/53; Pytes, Elizabeth, 8/5/53; See above, 514-16.

had been appointed vicar in 1538, the last vicar of this parish appointed by the prior of Coventry. He was a staunch Catholic and a defender of papal authority, on which matter he appears to have been very outspoken. His views seem to have caused offence to some of his parishioners, who apparently reported him. As a result commissioners were sent to Coventry to examine him. He was allowed to continue as vicar, but, a vindictive man, he sought revenge by falsely accusing his critic of offences against the Act of Six Articles. As we shall see, the outcome of the case is not known.[95] Ramridge continued as vicar of St. Michael's after Edward's accession until 1552 when he resigned. He was replaced by Hugh Symonds, a Protestant of Worcester.[96] The City Annals state that upon Edward's accession Ramridge and his curate, Henry Hybert, 'recanted their Papistry in St. Michaells Pulpitt'. There is no evidence of any other members of the clergy having to do this, and why Ramridge and his curate should have been singled out in this way is not known. Perhaps their recantation had something to do with earlier assertions by Ramridge of papal authority.[97]

The lack of Protestant clergy and preachers necessitated the importation of them. During Ramridge's incumbency in Edward's reign a Protestant preacher was appointed to St. Michael's: Leonard Cox, previously headmaster of Reading grammar school. He was almost certainly appointed to 'offset' Ramridge, because no preacher was appointed to Holy Trinity. Cox's time in Coventry can be established through the wills. He appears as witness to ten between 16 February 1549 and 11 December 1551. He is usually referred to as 'preacher

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95. See below, 506-13.

96. CPR Edward VI, V, 8; Foster, op. cit.

97. City Annals; CRO, Access. 2/F, f 24.

of St. Michael's', but on one occasion he is styled 'vicar and preacher', and on another as 'curate'. There is no evidence that he was ever ordained, however.[98] Ramridge does not appear as witness to any wills during Edward's reign, unlike Henry's.

Cox's appointment might have been secured by John Hales of the Whitefriars, himself a Protestant. Cox was a master of arts, a grammarian, rhetorician and poet, as well as a preacher. He wrote books on rhetoric and verses prefixed to publications of others. It is one of his books which connects him with Hales. In 1549, the year of his appointment, he dedicated his English translation of Erasmus' Paraphrase of the Epistle to Titus to John Hales, perhaps as a token of thanks for the latter's assisstance in obtaining the position as preacher. Hales was a self-educated man, who had taught himself Latin, Greek, French and German, and wrote for the use of the school he founded in Coventry a book called Introductiones ad Grammaticam. This was partly in Latin, partly in English. The History of that foundation describes him as 'a very good scholar, and a Lover of learning and Learned men'. Doubtless it was through their common interest in education that the two men met each other. Cox was eventually to become headmaster of King Henry Vlll's School in Coventry about 1572. Hales seems to have taken the opportunity to combine a favour to his friend with the promotion of Protestantism in Coventry by securing his appointment as preacher of St. Michael's.[99]

Henry Hybert was not so fortunate as his vicar. He had been

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98. DNB; LJRO, Wesson, Richard, ? /?/50; Bromwych, Richard, 13/4/51; Corbeyn, Thomas, 14/9/52; Eburne, John, 13/4/51.

99. Cox: DNB; Hales: DNB; An Account of the Many and Great Loans, Benefactions, and Charities Belonging to the City of Coventry . . ., anon., (Coventry and London, 1733), 73.

curate of St. Michael's since 1542, but seems to have been replaced after Edward's accession by a certain William Lynyng, who is styled 'curate' in a number of wills during this reign. He is not specifically referred to as 'curate of St. Michael's', but the wills he witnessed all belonged to members of that parish. Nothing is known about him before his appearance in Edward's reign. He was, presumably, a Protestant, and might have been brought into Coventry to remedy the lack of such clergy in the city. Hybert remained in Coventry, however, for he appears as witness to a will in 1556.[100]

There is some evidence that many citizens were perhaps not enamoured of the Protestant clergy. It is noticeable that few Edwardian testators made bequests for tithes 'omitted' or 'forgotten'.[101] Does this indicate lack of support for the new religion? And if citizens were not making these retrospective payments were they paying their tithes at all? Such bequests for outstanding payments decline suddenly and abruptly with Edward's accession. It is difficult to believe that people had suddenly started to pay all their tithes. And since Edward's accession did not coincide with a sudden drop in the city's economic fortunes, we cannot attribute the abrupt decline in these bequests to an external factor of that kind.

The value of both vicarages, but especially Holy Trinity, declined steeply during Edward's reign, which suggests that many citizens were not paying tithes at all. On 20 April 1550 William Benet farmed the vicarage of Holy Trinity for seven years to John Tallants, a goldsmith and former mayor of the city in 1545, and John Farmer, clerk,

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100. LJRO, Bowker, Thomas, 27/4/47; Knight, William, 13/4/51; Neshe, Rose, 12/10/51; Raynescroft, Thomas, 27/4/47.

101. See Appendix, Tables, 5, I8.

probably the former priest of Corpus Christi Guild, for 20 marks and a yearly rent of £6 13s.4d.[102] This latter figure appears to have been all that the vicarage was worth at this time and Benet was trying to stabilize his income. As we have seen, a survey of 1546 found the vicarage to be worth £25 2s.4d. before charges.[103] The sum of £6 13s.4d. was also a gross figure, for Tallants and Farmer agreed to 'paye and dischardge all manere of pencions and porcons tenthes and all other dueties and payments what so ever they be aswell ordynarye as extra-ordinarye going out and to be paide of the saide vicarage'. They were also required to 'fynde one able and sufficient Curate or mynistre to dischardge and serve the cure of the Churche and parishe' at their own costs and charges. There is no indication that Holy Trinity had a curate during Edward VI's reign at all, which is explained by the steep decline in the value of the vicarage.

While vicar of St. Michael's, John Ramridge paid few of the charges, especially tenths, due from him. Given what we know of him, it might be suggested that he deliberately withheld such payments, but this is unlikely. Bequests for outstanding tithes by parishioners of St. Michael's follow an almost identical pattern to such bequests by the parishioners of Holy Trinity, suggesting that the inhabitants of this parish were also witholding their tithes. Ramridge's non-payment of charges placed his successor in a difficult position. However, on 6 March 1552 the Privy Council wrote to the chancellor of the Court of First Fruits and Tenths requesting him to forbear demanding the arrears 'due by the predicessour of one Hugh Symondes' for the second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth years of the king's reign, and of the

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102. WRO, Holy Trinity Parish, DR 429/74.

103. See above, 431-32.

subsidy due on 1 October in the third and fourth years of the king's reign. The chancellor was instructed to contact the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield's officers to find out why they had done nothing to recover them. A letter was also sent to the chancellor of the Court of Augmentations to acquaint Symonds of his predecessor's arrears. To have forced Symonds to pay all these arrears would have bankrupted him. Both vicarages fell into decay during Edward's reign, therefore, a situation which created difficulties in Mary's.[104]

The intriguing disappearance of bequests for tithes forgotten is, however, not the only evidence concerning relations between clergy and citizens at this time. Relations between the two in Edward's reign were not as they had been in his father's. This was largely due to the fact that few clergy were now employed in the city and so there was less contact between them and the citizens. How many clergy there were in Edward's reign is not known, but there would have been many fewer than before the dissolution of the guilds and chantries, etc. Few clergy appear as witness to wills in Edward's reign and even fewer as overseers and executors. Bequests to the clergy all but disappear.[105] In most cases where clergy do feature in the wills they are the Henrician clergy and not the Edwardian, and are all drawn from the unemployed clerical population in the city. Their relations with the testators undoubtedly extended back into the previous reign. Leonard Cox did receive two bequests, however. Both bequests were made towards the end of his time as preacher in 1551. Thomas Griffin bequeathed him 2d. and Thomas Morres 5s.[106] Nonetheless, the evidence

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104. APC, IV, 1552-1553, 230-31.

105. See Appendix, Table 63.

106. LJRO, Griffin, Thomas, 12/10/51; Morres, Thomas, 9/7/51.

suggests that the citizens and clergy were now less interrelated.

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The accession of Mary brought about abrupt changes in the clergy in Coventry. William Benet was deprived of his living of Holy Trinity for being married, but seems to have had little difficulty in obtaining further preferment, being appointed as vicar of Crowle, Worcestershire on 22 April 1553. His successor was George Bruche, a master of arts, who was appointed on 8 August 1554. Holy Trinity was apparently without a vicar for the first year of Mary's reign. Perhaps a curate was appointed as caretaker, for a certain Ralph Cantrell appears as witness to some wills during this year in which he is styled 'curate of Holy Trinity'. He disappears after Bruche's appointment to the vicarage, which was still unable to support both a vicar and a curate.[107]

Hugh Symonds of St. Michael's caused trouble in Coventry shortly after Mary's accession when he preached a sermon in the city against the mass. It was sufficiently inflammatory to precipitate his arrest upon orders from the Privy Council. In August 1553 the mayor was ordered to arrest him and convey him to London for examination. Enclosed with the order was a commission 'to punish at thier discreacion suche slanderous talkers as by occayson of his lewde preaching have syns mynistred very dissolute and sedycious talke among them selfes'. Symonds appeared before the Council in September. The mayor and aldermen were instructed to allow Symonds his freedom in the city only if 'he do recant the lewed woordes that he lately spake, wisshing them hanged that woulde saye masse'. If he refused, he was to be arrested and the Council informed, to the intent that the queen's pleasure

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107. Emden, AD 1501 - 1540. 43; CPR Mary. I, 359; LJRO, Poulter, Agnes, 16/4/53; Hall, John, 16/10/53.

might be known. Symonds was deprived of his living in Coventry, however, for being married, but no successor was appointed until 1557. Nor does the church seem to have had a curate until this time.[108]

It is possible that no one was appointed because of the decline in the value of the vicarage. This seems to be borne out by the private Act of Parliament in 1557 which instituted a rent-charge in lieu of personal tithes of 2s. in the £ on house rents. Legislation of this kind was not uncommon. Unfortunately we know nothing about the circumstances of Coventry's initiative. The preamble to the act stated that 'since ye said disorders and scismatical time, in ye religion of Christ, ye goodwills & devotion of ye people is so much decayed, that the said Benefices be not able conveniently to find any Incumbent of any honest estimation and learning, in so much yt ye greatest Parish in ye said City, called St. Michael's, in Coventry, hath, & yet doth remain these four years and a half without any Incumbent or Vicar, by reason the profitts & emoluments of ye same are so small, yt no learned or apt Priest will be content to accept or receive the same, & so is very like to remain, if remedy be not ordained'. Such a move was welcomed by the queen, and one of the reasons why the act was allowed was that otherwise, 'ye Catholick and devout people inhabiting in ye said City shall want & not have the Sacraments of ye Church to them ministred according as it is meet for Christian people to have'. The appointment of a vicar to St. Michael's about this time suggests that this act had the desired effect.[109]

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108. APC, ibid., 333, 338, 340.

109. Sharpe, op. cit., 5 - 7. The vicar of St. Michael's, who is not named, witnessed Robert Dayde's will, LJRO, 10/7/57.

There is another explanation, however. It is possible that no suitable candidate could be found to serve this considerable cure. After her accession Mary concentrated on depriving married clergy, which displaced many clergy and caused a large upset. Like Benet, most found another living, but there was a shortage of priests deemed suitable by Mary to hold livings. Anyone tainted with the schism was considered unsuitable as a candidate for preferment.[110] St. Michael's was a large and important living and it is unlikely that the queen, in whose hands the presentation was, would have appointed someone who did not meet her requirements. Hence the parish remained without a vicar or curate throughout her reign. This view is supported by the fact that a vicar was found for Holy Trinity whose vicarage was in as poor a condition as St. Michael's, if not worse. Moreover, the citizens appear to have started paying their tithes again with Mary's accession - almost as abruptly as they had witheld them after Edward's accession. Bequests for outstanding tithes begin to appear in numbers in the wills from 1553 in the case of both parishes, although they are most numerous in the last three years of the reign, between 1555/56 and 1558.[111] Perhaps the situation was not as bad as the act suggested.

The numbers of clergy identifiable as Catholics was very small by 1555. The clerical taxation of this year supplies the names of only ten secular clergy who had been chantry, obit or stipendiary priests in the city and were still receiving their pensions in this

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110. R. H. Pogson, 'The Legacy of the Schism: Confusion, Continuity and Change in the Marian Clergy' in Jennifer Loach and R. Tittler (eds.), The Mid-Tudor Polity c 1540 - 1560, (1980), 116 - 136.

111. See Appendix, Tables 5, 18.

year, out of a total of nineteen who had originally been granted them. Of these, only six are known definitely to have been in the city. Moreover, all were at least middle-aged by this time. William Mathew was forty-eight, Thomas Elysden was sixty-seven, Rowland Gosnell was forty-three, Thomas Horden was fifty-eight and Thomas Barnes was fifty-two. William Queenborough was also still alive, but his age is not known. How many had remained faithful to their Catholic beliefs is not known, but Queenborough's will suggests strongly that he had. He provided for a perpetual obit for his soul in St. Michael's and for a priest to say mass for his soul twice a week for two years. He stipulated, however, that the priest was to be 'an honest prreist wyche was never maryed', which is revealing of his attitude.[112]

For most of Mary's reign these clergy would still have had to rely on their pensions to support themselves. Not until the citizens returned to the old practices would they have found regular employment, and been hired for funerals, obits and the like. As we have seen bequests for masses and prayers did not appear until the last three years of Mary's reign. The crafts do not appear to have hired priests permanently as they had done before 1547, but as and when they needed them, e.g. for their annual feast days.[113] Some of the services were apparently restored in the parish churches, namely the Jesus masses and perhaps Our Lady Mass, which would have provided positions for some priests. The religious guilds, formerly among

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112. E179/18/503, ff 4 - 5; E/301/57, ff 1 - 2; LJRO, Queenborough, William, 3/10/58.

113. See above, 229-30.

the largest clerical employers in the city, were not restored, of course, and so this route to employment was closed.

The gradual restoration of traditional practices also brought about a recovery of that high profile in the community which the clergy had enjoyed before Edward's reign. Thus they appear as witnesses, overseers and executors to wills again, although there are few bequests to them as yet.[114] They are once again found entrusted with the affairs of the citizens. For example, in 1555 Robert Claughton bequeathed 20s. to John Harrison the younger, a minor, and entrusted the money to Nicholas Capenhurst, priest, 'to the proffyt of the Chyld'.[115]

There is also evidence of a new generation of clergy serving in the city in the last years of Mary's reign, clergy whose names have not previously appeared. Henry Hall was witness to several wills in 1557 and 1558. He was apparently attached to St. Michael's. A Thomas Sharman who witnessed a will in 1558, was apparently attached to Holy Trinity. Similarly, Thomas Woolton appears as witness to a will in 1558, who was also apparently attached to this church.[116] Where these priests came from or who they were is not known. They do not appear to be from Coventry families, however. And of course

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114. See Appendix, Table 64.

115. LJRO, Claughton, Robert, 20/4/56.

116. LJRO, Goldyng, Richard, 11/10/57; Churchman, William, 7/2/57; Formar, Thomas, 10/11/57, Mareqe, Richard, 7/2/57; Townshend, Richard, 7/2/57; Amwey, Richard, 4/10/58; Pynchart, Randell, 13/10/58; Simson, William, 28/11/58.

by this time a vicar had been appointed to St. Michael's and a curate as well.

Here as elsewhere we must lament the fact that sources for Mary's (as for Edward's) are so tantalisingly incomplete. The indications are, however, that like the old order in general the clergy in Coventry were gradually regaining strength in the last year or so of Mary's reign; but too late. What the clergy needed if they were to return to their former strength was time, and that they did not have.

CHAPTER VIII

Heresy and Protestantism

The development and spread of Protestantism is the most contentious area of debate on the Reformation. There are essentially two points of view: one sees the Reformation as being religiously inspired, and prompted by a widespread desire for reform of the Church. Later medieval Lollardy is ascribed an important role in this argument, which is seen as evidence of people questioning the Church, and, by sowing doubt in their minds, making them receptive to Protestantism. Efforts are made to show a continuous line of development from one to the other. The other point of view sees the Reformation as having been largely imposed upon people by the state and owing little to religious inspiration. This view often accords only slight importance to Lollardy; and for all the shortcomings of the pre-Reformation Church, which are not denied, popular anticlericalism is not given a major role in the story. The fastest growth of Protestantism is dated from Edward VI's reign, when the institutional structure of the Church had been swept away, thereby facilitating and legitimizing the introduction and spread of the new creed. So far as Coventry is concerned, the evidence from the sources suggests that the second of these theories is the more likely explanation of events.

Given the importance attributed by some to Lollardy, we will begin with an examination of the Lollard sect in Coventry in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The first persecution of these heretics in Coventry was conducted by John Hales, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (1459-1490) on 9 March 1485 against eight men of the city. The source for the persecution is the abstract of the proceedings preserved in Hales' Register, which gives the names of the

accused and lists the charges against them.[1] The views expressed by the accused were disbelief in transubstantiation, reading the English Scriptures, making derogatory statements about images, pilgrimages and Purgatory, and simple anti-sacerdotal remarks in everyday conversation. It must seem strange, however, that the sacrament of the altar was mentioned in only three cases. Richard Gilmin asserted that the sacrament was only bread and that priests 'made it' to blind people. He was the only one of the three explicitly to deny the transubstantiation. Robert Crowther held that whoever received the sacrament in mortal sin, or out of charity, received nothing but bread and wine, while Roger Brown confessed that he neither looked up nor raised his hands at the time of the elevation.

The eight were more or less united in their hostility to pilgrimages and the veneration of images, in particular the image of the Virgin in the Chapel of our Lady of the Tower in Coventry. Only one of them did not express any view on this. John Blumston asserted that there was as much value in a herb as in an image of the Virgin, and that it was foolish to go on pilgrimages to the images of Doncaster, Walsingham and Coventry, because they were but 'dead stocks and stones', and a man might as well worship the Virgin by the fireside in his kitchen, or when he saw his mother and sister, as in the aforesaid places. Crowther held that it was foolish to worship the image of the Virgin in the Tower Chapel in Coventry, because it was but a 'stock or a stone'. Richard Hegham also thought it foolish to worship the image in the Tower Chapel in the city, as well of other saints, because, again,

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1. LJRO, B/A/1/12, ff 166 - 168. Most of the articles against the accused were listed by John Foxe. G. Townshend (ed.), The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe, 8 vols. (1843-49), IV, 133-35. Foxe did omit some articles, however, an example of which is given below, 475.

they were but 'stocks and stones', and added that if the image was thrown into the fire it would probably burn well. He also held that it was better to give money to the poor than to offer it to images. John Falks was heard to say when he refused to make an offering to an image of the Virgin (presumably that of Coventry) that 'hyr hed shalbe hoore or I offur to hur. What is hit but a blok. If hyt cothe speke to me I wolde gyffe hit an halpeni of ale'. Brown asserted that no man ought to worship the image of the Virgin at Walsingham nor the Blood of Christ at Hailes, but rather God Almighty, because he would give him whatever he asked. Thomas Butler held that prayers and pilgrimages were of no value, as they did not purchase the way to Heaven. Richard Gilmin thought it better to give money to the poor than to give tithes to priests or offer to images of the Virgin, and that it was better to offer to images made by God than to painted images of God.

Some of the accused denied the existence of Purgatory, or the need for masses and prayers for the dead, and good works. Blumston held that prayers and alms were of no value, for immediately after death a person went either to Heaven or Hell. Hegham thought that a Christian man at the point of death ought to renounce all of his works, both good and ill, and submit to the mercy of God. Butler stated outright that there was no Purgatory, that every man immediately after death passes to Heaven or Hell and that whoever departs this world in the faith of Jesus Christ, however he has lived, will be saved, for no man should suffer any pain after the death of Christ for any sin because he died for everyone. Brown dwelt at length on the subject of Purgatory. He asserted that, if any man had not been confessed and absolved at any time in his life and at the point of death wished to

be and could not, then, if he had contrition in his heart he would go to Heaven without having to pass through Purgatory.

Views were also expressed on the power of the priesthood, which were linked closely to those on Purgatory. Crowther held that neither bishops, priests, nor curates had the power to absolve a man, as he put it, 'in the market place of penance'. An identical view was expressed by John Smith. Falks denied that a priest had the power to absolve a man because he could not make one hair of his head. He also questioned why, when a priest carried the body of Christ to the sick, he did not take also the blood of Christ. Blumston did not think that going to church was to any special effect when a man could pray just as well at home, and there is little more than simple anti-sacerdotalism in the following remark: 'A vengeance on alle suche horsom prestis ffor they have gret envy that apore man shulde gete hys leuynge amonge hem'. In a similar vein, Brown asserted that all was lost that was given to priests. Gilmin held that a priest while he was at mass was a priest, but afterwards, until the beginning of another mass, he was no more than a layman, and had no more power than a layman. He also said that no priest spoke better in the pulpit than did a book.

There are a number of references to books which the accused possessed. Gilmin admitted he had a copy of the Lord's Prayer, the salutation of the angel and the Creed in English, and another book with the Epistles and Gospels in English, and said he would live according to what they contained and thereby be saved. This explains his remark about priests speaking from pulpits. Smith considered that whoever believed churchmen believed ill, and that a man needed to frequent the schools a good while before he could attain knowledge of the true and right faith.

He thought everyone should know the Lord's Prayer and the Creed in English. Brown also possessed some books, for he stated that he had promised a certain man that he would show them to him as long as he swore not to reveal them. One of the most extreme views expressed by any of the accused was derived from his reading. Crowther wanted the words 'qui conceptus est de spiritu sancto natus est ex Maria virgine' removed from the Creed, because he did not believe them. This article is omitted by Foxe in his summary of the articles against the accused. It was a belief which would have been anathema to Protestants as well as Catholics. Foxe could not have held up the Lollards as early Protestants if they were known to hold extreme views such as this.

The foregoing list of beliefs held by the eight accused shows that there was not a single subject on which all eight expressed views. It is especially remarkable that only three should have held heretical views on the sacrament of the altar, the hallmark of Lollards everywhere. Perhaps shortcomings in the procedures adopted by Hales accounts for this. J.A.F. Thomson, discussing the procedures adopted in heresy trials in this later period, points out the importance of the lists of questions found in various Bishops' Registers 'As many of the Lollards were uneducated men, whose ideas of theology were vague, examination by questioning could serve to systematise beliefs into a more rigid form than that which they were in the mind of the accused'.[2] But it seems that Hales did not proceed in this way, but on a more informal, adhoc basis. Hence (perhaps) the lack of information on cardinal points of Lollard doctrine. Hales seems to have made no attempt to

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2. J.A.F. Thomson, The Later Lollards, 1414 - 1520, (London and OUP, 1965), 229.

probe, which raises the question of how important he thought the trial was. It seems that he did not think it very important. Had he probed deeper he might have discovered the sizeable Lollard community in Coventry more than a quarter of a century before it was laid bare.

Subsequently, Hales tried another Coventry citizen for heresy. In 1489 one Robert Clerk appeared before him on several charges. He refused to swear, held that it was good to give money to the poor, and asserted that all effective prayer was contained in the Creed. He added that the Lord's Prayer and the Ave were of no effect, and that it was damnable to say them, and also claimed that he knew how to make men speak face to face with God.[3] Whether or not he was a member of the sect at Coventry is not clear. His views on giving money to the poor might suggest he was a Lollard, but the others are eccentric to say the least, and suggest perhaps that he was not a little mad.

The next persecution of the Lollards in Coventry were carried out by Geoffrey Blythe, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (1503-1531), from late 1511 to early 1512. This was a major persecution in which a total of seventy-one people were examined. Though all stood in danger of the court, only fifty-three eventually abjured, while one was burnt for relapse. The trials carried out by Blythe were among that large number held about this time throughout England as a result of the Convocation of 6 February 1511, which met in order to deal with Lollard heresy. Afterwards quite a few bishops instigated persecutions in their dioceses, among whom was Blythe, while others continued persecutions recently begun. Warham of Canterbury began a full-scale purge of his diocese in the spring of 1511. Smith of Lincoln and Mayew of Hereford both renewed the persecution of heretics in their

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3. LJRO, B/A/1/12, f 169.

dioceses in August 1511. Bainbridge of York began a purge of his diocese in 1511 also. Fitzjames of London had undertaken a persecution of heretics in his diocese in 1510, and merely continued with it.[4] It is against this background that the trials in Coventry, as elsewhere, must be seen. Care must be exercised lest the Lollards are made more significant than they were - simply because zealous bishops were seeking them out. Hales, it will be remembered, was not overly concerned about them. As we shall see, the Lollard sect in Coventry had reached its peak of development some time before the trials of 1511-12, by which time it was in a state of steep decline.

The sources for the trials in Coventry in 1511-12 are unusually, if not uniquely, excellent. Not only is there the abstract of the proceedings in Blythe's Register, but the original Court Book from which that abstract was derived is still extant, the only one there is for a persecution in the later period. Using these sources together, it is possible to build up a complete picture of the Lollard community in Coventry, not only at the time of the trials, but also of its fortunes in the decade or so before the trials, which is what the following analysis will be primarily concerned with. Most of the information is supplied by the Court Book itself, which is a far more detailed account of the trials than the brief entry in Blythe's Register. The latter contains a selective summary of the original Court Book, and is concerned with little more than the names of the accused, the articles against them and a record of their abjurations. The Court Book, however, records in full the interrogations of the accused, that is, the answers to the questions that were put to them individually.[5]

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4. Thomson, op.cit., 237-38.

5. Court Book, LJRO, B/C/13; Blythe's Register, LJRO, B/A/I/141, ff 98 - 100.

Blythe's persecution laid the Lollard sect in Coventry bare. The procedures he adopted, which stand in contrast to those employed by Hales, ensured that this would be the case. Heresy trials were dominated by the urge to gain a confession. Articles were drawn up to which the accused had to make answer, and confession to any one of them put that person in danger of the court. Examples of the articles put to the accused in 1511-12 can be found in both the Court Book and the Register, and the striking thing about them is their brevity.[6] So far as Blythe was concerned, all he wanted to know was their beliefs regarding the sacrament of the altar, veneration of images and pilgrimages, what books they possessed and who were the other members of the sect. This accounts for the little that we know about their beliefs beyond those which were central to Lollardy, since it was not necessary to establish all of them in order to find them guilty. The articles concerned with books reveal Blythe's conviction that they played an extremely important role in fostering the beliefs of the accused. They formed the basis of all teaching within the sect, and without them teaching would be severely curtailed, if not impossible. Replacement would be expensive and difficult. It would have taken considerable time to build up again the extensive collection which the sect in Coventry evidently possessed. Arguably the most important part of a confession was the admission of association with known heretics and the naming of others not yet known. In this way one confession would lead to another, and so on until all those involved were exposed. Moreover, the cross-referencing of depositions would provide the necessary body of witnesses against the accused. And for anyone brought before the court on suspicion who refused to confess

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6. LJRO, B/C/13, ff 22 - 25; B/A/I/141, f 98.

Blythe favoured a spell in prison to loosen their tongues.

Hales' persecution in 1485 was ineffectual in stamping out Lollard heresy in Coventry, therefore, and the sect which he had uncovered continued for another quarter of a century before Blythe's assault. None of those found guilty in 1485 was ever tried as a relapsed heretic, the ecclesiastical authorities proving themselves in the intervening period to have been either lax or uninterested. Some vigilance was maintained, however, for in her deposition in 1511 Alice Rowley confessed to having been arrested previously on suspicion. She did not state when this was - but she had been released after providing sixteen compurgators to clear her name. That she had had to provide so many suggests that the suspicion was heavy.[7] It does not seem that any other inquiries were made at that time by the ecclesiastical authorities, which is surprising. This omission may have been due to a number of reasons - perhaps the fact the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth saw a series of Bishops of Coventry and Lichfield in quick succession. Hales died in 1490, and for the following three years the see apparently remained vacant. Between 1493 and 1496 William Smith was bishop, while he was succeeded by John Arundel, Blythe's predecessor. The disruption which these frequent changes of administrations must have caused could have worked in favour of the Lollard community in Coventry.

The interrogations of the accused of 1511-12 reveal that three of the eight found guilty by Hales in 1485 - Blumston, Brown and Smith - were not sincere in their abjurations at that time, but actively sought out and converted others in subsequent years. Several of the accused confessed that they had been taught their heresies by one or more of

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7. LJRO, B/C/13, ff 6, 16.

these three men. Thomas Warde stated that he had had conversations with Brown. John Johnson of Birmingham said that he had been taught his opinions by Brown, with the counsel of Smith and a certain 'Master John Physician', who can be identified from another person's interrogation as being Blumston. Johnson was one of those who were interrogated a second time, and then he added that Thomas Acton was familiar with Brown and Blumston, and that Thomas Archer, together with his wife, had been in Blumston's house, where he had heard the latter 'dogmatize' against pilgrimages and the veneration of images. John Clerc confessed to having had conversations with Brown and Blumston against the veneration of images. Roger Laudesdale stated that he had been taught his opinions by Brown before his death. Thomas Banbrook said that he had talked with Blumston on the subject of pilgrimages and images. Joan Gest, wife of John Gest the elder, confessed to having been taught her beliefs by Smith. John Bull, who at seventeen, was the youngest member of the sect, and the nephew of Blumston, confessed to having been instructed against the sacrament of the altar by him since his ninth year. All three of these men were dead by the time of the trials, however.[8]

The heresies of which those brought to trial in 1511-12 were accused were identical to those held by the eight men persecuted in 1485. Some expressed forbidden views on the sacrament of the altar. Both John Bull and Thomas Banbrock, when claiming that Blumston had taught them their beliefs, stated that he had specifically instructed them that 'the hoste consecrate was not the very body of our Lord but a figur', and '<u>acciperet illud in signum passionis xpi et non crederat</u>

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8. <u>ibid</u>., f 13, 2, 14, 15, 5, 10, 20, 13. For the indentification of Blumston as 'Master John Physician', <u>ibid</u>., f 13.

ibi esse verum corpus domini'. Joan, the wife of Richard Smyth, said 'quod tempore eleuacionis eucaristie non credit ibi verum fuisse corpus domini sed panem substancialem'. A number of the accused also denied that a priest could 'make' God. Robert Silkby asked, 'what, can a preyse make of a morsell of Brede & shuld take god and ete hym to daie and do likewise to morowe?', while Joan Smyth asked, 'May a priste make god to daie & ete hym a doo likewise to morowe?'. Thomas Abell said he had been told by Thomas Bowen that 'god made men & not man god as the Carpenter doith make the howse & not the howse the carpenter', and that 'he shuld take it [the sacrament of the altar] as a token or a rememberance of the Passen & not the very body of cryste'. Alice Rowley believed that the elevation of the host was an offering in memory of Christ's Passion.[9]

Views were also expressed against the veneration of images and pilgrimages. The image of the Virgin in the Chapel of Our Lady of the Tower still aroused particularly vehement criticism. John Cropwell deposed that Robert Hatchet said to a person making an offering there, 'God help the, thow arte a foule'. David Clerc said that he heard Bowen, Hatchet and Laudesdale speak against pilgrimages to the same image. Among others who expressed hostility to pilgrimages and images in general was John Longland, who asserted that it was better to give money to the poor than to images, a statement which also echoes the beliefs expressed by some of those found guilty in 1485. Thomas Acton said that he heard Alice Rowley say the same thing. There is little indication of other opinions held by the accused this time on such things as the papacy, the power of the priesthood and Purgatory, which held Hales' attention twenty five years before. John Gest the

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9. ibid., ff 13, 10, 4, 2, 4, 21, 6.

younger did object to the payment of tithes, however, and there is a partial reference to what appears to be a condemnation of 'money-grabbing' priests. Alice Rowley said it was 'a pretty falshod of the pristes to by a C cakes for a peny and sell them agayn .....'. Beyond these references, and those mentioned before nothing else is known about the beliefs at this time.[10]

The interrogations of the accused revealed that many of them had been Lollards for some time. Thomas Warde said that he had held his beliefs for the past twelve years. Joan Smith, wife of Richard Smith, said that she had held her beliefs for the past eleven years. Balthasar Shuckborough claimed that he had been taught his opinions by John Smith some thirteen years previously. Robert Hatchet stated that Robert Pegge had been a member of the sect for seven years. Joanna Ward, alias Washingbury, said that she had been taught her beliefs by Alice Rowley some twenty years previously. Thomas Clerk said that he had held his beliefs for the past twelve years. John Gest the elder had held his opinions for eleven years. John Johnson stated that he was thirty eight, and that he had been apprenticed to one Richard Wilcockes of London (where he remained for fourteen years), before moving to Coventry. There he had stayed with Roger Brown, who had taught him his beliefs. Since it is unlikely that Johnson would have been apprenticed before his seventh year, he would have been not less than twenty one when he came to Coventry about 1494-95. Thus he would have held his beliefs for seventeen or eighteen years before the trials in 1511-12.[11]

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10. ibid., ff 18, 13, 11, 20, 25,

11. ibid., ff 1, 4, 19, 7, 16, 19, 4, 2.

To this evidence must be added a further point regarding the age of the members of the Lollard sect in Coventry. In his study of the Court Book shortly after its discovery, J. Fines pointed out that there was a predominance of older people in the sect.[12] This he deduced from the ages of many of those interrogated (which were noted down in the Court Book depositions) and from the length of time that some of the accused had held their beliefs. Many of the ages were only estimates, but there is every indication that they were about right. Thus John Johnson was estimated to be about forty years old, and he himself stated in his examination that he was thirty eight.[13] There is no reason to suppose that the other estimates were not as accurate. Of the thirty-two ages given, one was under twenty, five between twenty and twenty-nine, six between thirty and thirty-nine, seven between forty and forty-nine, six between fifty and fifty-nine and seven between sixty and sixty-nine. The average age was forty-two, but this obscures the fact that of the thirty-two people whose ages are known, twenty of them were about the average age of the group or older. This indicates that the membership was made up of predominantly middle-aged and elderly people. Fines makes little of this very interesting and significant fact, which suggests that the Lollard sect in Coventry was not regenerating itself, that is, it was not attracting the new people, especially young people, who were necessary if it was to survive.

To this evidence must be added the fact that some of the accused in their depositions recorded in the Court Book referred to certain

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12. J. Fines, 'Heresy Trials in the Diocese of Coventry and Lichfield 1511-12', JEH, xlv (1963), 162.

13. LJRO, B/C/13, f 2.

individuals who had been members of the sect as 'Magistri', a term which is normally used to describe those who sat on the city council, that is, those who were the ruling elite of Coventry. The presence of individuals from this social class challenges the accepted view of Lollardy as exclusively an artisan-based heresy, but before looking at who these people were, a few general points about them and their apparent membership of the Lollard sect must be made. With a few exceptions all those members of the ruling elite mentioned by the accused were dead by the time of the 1511-12 trials, and so could not be confronted by their accusers. All of them had held various civic offices, including the office of mayor in some cases, in the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth. Indeed, many of those who were tried by Blythe would have been the contemporaries of those of the ruling elite who had once been members. With a membership which boasted representatives of the ruling elite of the city, the 1480s, 1490s and early 1500s must have been an exciting and energetic period for the sect in Coventry. It had reached its peak by this time, however, only to decline thereafter.

Some of the ruling elite referred to by the accused have been identified by Imogen Luxton, who sought to supplement the information supplied by the Register and Court Book with that derived from wills.[14] She identified the 'Magistra Cooke' referred to as Richard Cooke, a mercer, who held various civic offices in the late fifteenth century, being sheriff in 1480, and mayor in 1486 and 1503. He also represented the city in the parliaments of 1491-2 and 1495.[15] Cooke's will of

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14. Imogen Luxton, ' The Lichfield Court Book: a Postscript', BIHR., XLIV (1971), 120-25.

15. LJRO, B/C/13, f 19, 7; LB, 528, 601,

1507 is extant, and Miss Luxton noted three bequests of books as positive proof of his Lollard beliefs: 'Item I bequeth to Our Lady Chapell in the seid Trinitie Church a Bible in Englisshe. Item to the Jesus Awter a boke called vita christi there to be chayned. Item I bequeth to the parisshe Church of Walsall a bible in englisshe'.[16] Cooke's collection of books was known to Robert Hatchet, who referred to them in his examination.[17] There is an intimate connection between the possession of English translations of the Bible and Lollardy, and it would seem that, given this association, Cooke was indeed a Lollard. However, while it is not denied that Cooke was involved with the sect in Coventry in some way, it is questionable whether he was truly of the sect. The mere possession of English translations of the Bible is insufficient to brand a person as a Lollard, and in Cooke's case this, even together with his evident links to the sect, must be balanced against the strong indications of conservative religious beliefs in his will.

Let us set aside for the moment his bequests of English Bibles and consider the rest of Cooke's will. It is entirely orthodox. It adheres to the traditional formula in the preamble, where he bequeaths his soul to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Holy Company of Heaven. He wished to be buried in St. Michael's next to his mother-in-law. His hearse was to be preceded by five torches and twelve tapers, after which one torch was to be given to each of five named altars in the church, 'to give light to the Sacrament': Our Lady's, The Jesus, St. Katherine's, St. Anne's and the high altars. The friars of both houses in the city and the monks of the Charterhouse just outside were

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16. PCC, 29 Adeane.

17. LJRO, B/C/13, f 7.

to perform additional funeral dirges and requiem masses on the day after his burial. All this suggests that Cooke held quite orthodox views despite his possession of English Bibles and association with the Lollard sect. What is most difficult to explain, if he was indeed a Lollard, is his instructions regarding his burial if he should die more than twenty miles from Coventry. In that event he directed that his body was 'to be buryed in the next Church afore the ymage of our Lady', a most unusual desire for a Lollard!

There is much conflicting evidence in Cooke's case, therefore, which is fairly typical of every member of the ruling elite connected with the Lollard sect in the city. J. Fines drew attention to claims made by two of the accused that members of the Wigston and Pysford families of Leicester and Coventry were involved in the sect. He quoted Thomas Wrixham, who said that 'magistri Wiggeston et Pysford habent pulcherrimos libros de herese', although he declined to speculate upon their identity. He might also have quoted John Atkynson, who stated that he heard Thomas Bowen say that 'magister Pisford erat huiusmodi secti et opinionis', which is to go a stage further, suggesting that a member of the Pysford family was indeed a Lollard.[18] Miss Luxton did speculate on which members of the two families these were most likely to have been. She suggests that John Wigston (MP for Leicester borough in 1478, mayor of the city in 1469-70 and 1480-81, and mayor of Coventry in 1491-92, and master of Trinity Guild in 1498) and his son William, (chamberlain of Coventry in 1496, mayor of Leicester in 1499-1500, MP for Leicester borough in 1504, bailiff of Coventry in 1507 and mayor of Leicester again in 1510-11) were the most likely

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18. J. Fines, op.cit., 170; LJRO, B/C/13, ff 7, 18

members of the Wigston family.[19] Miss Luxton does not choose between them, however, for lack of evidence. However, William Wigston's interests appear to have lain in Leicester while his father's were in Coventry, which suggests he was not the member of this family referred to by the accused.

There is a very cryptic piece of evidence provided by the City Annals which is not mentioned by Miss Luxton. The Annals for 1491, the year in which John Wigston was mayor of Coventry, state: 'This Mayor did stryve against Our Ladye Place of the Wt. Friers'.[20] The image of the Virgin in the Tower Chapel was the object of much hostility from those Lollards persecuted in 1485, while a few references were made to it by those on trial in 1511-12. This would seem to strengthen the likelihood that John Wigston was the 'Wiggeston' referred to by Wrixham and Atkynson rather than his son, but if he used his position as mayor to attack the image because of his Lollard beliefs, then he was incredibly indiscreet in doing so.

John Wigston's will of 1513 tells a different story, however. It is the will of an orthodox catholic. After bequeathing his soul to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Holy Company of Heaven, he directed that he was to be buried in the collegiate church of Newark in Leicester 'nere the Chapell of my soonne William', and that there were to be twenty-four poor men in black gowns and hoods provided by him carrying a torch each, and another twenty-four poor men carrying a taper each. The funeral services were to be performed by every one of the priests, clerks and children, etc., of the church, for he

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19. S. T. Bindoff (ed.), The House of Commons 1509-1558, 3 vols., (1982).

20. City Annals, F. Bliss Burbidge, Old Coventry and Lady Godiva: Being Some Flowers of Coventry History, (Birmingham, n.d.), 223.

bequeathed 'in the day of my buriall for my exequies' 2s. to 'every Chanon of the saide College', 12d. 'to every vicar', 12d. 'to every Clerk', 8d 'to every Chantry prest' and 6d. 'to every querester'. As well, 1d. was to be given to every one of the beadmen in the beadhouse attached to the same, and 1d. to every poor man and woman who attended the funeral. He further bequeathed £50 to the college to keep an anniversary obit for him in perpetuity, and £40 to the 'Abbey of Leycester', presumably the monastery of De Pratis, to the same end, as well as £100 to the church of St. Martin's in Leicester to find a priest to sing for him in perpetuity. In other words he founded a chantry.[21] All this seems difficult to reconcile with allegations of Lollardy. If he was a Lollard, how could he make such a will?

As for the member of the Pysford family referred to be Wrixham, Atkynson and Bowen, there is only one possibility: William Pysford the elder. His two sons can be ruled out, because neither of them held civic office, and so were not deserving of the title 'Magistra'. Pysford was made a warden in 1486, a sheriff in 1494 and a bailiff the following year, rising to the position of Mayor in 1501.[22] Miss Luxton suggests that the phraseology of the preamble to his will of 1517 at first sight anticipates the later Protestant wording. He bequeathed his soul in the following manner: 'unto almighty god the fader of hevyn, beseching hym to take it into the handes of his everlasting mercy and grace, and to make me partener and parte taker of the Rewarde and merits of the blessed passion and deth of Jhesu crist his only sonne, through the intercession and prayer of that most and

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21. 10 and 20 Fetiplace.

22. LB, 528, 557, 563, 600.

blessed virgyn Mary the moder of our blissed Savyor and lord Jhesu Crist moder of mercy and grace and through the intercession and praiers of the holy Appostells peter and powle, John, James, Bartilmewe, saint John the Baptist, Mary Mawdelyn, saint Kateryn with all the nombre of hevyn as patriarks, proffits, Appostells, marters, Confessours and virgyns and all Angells and Saints to pray for me'. An identical preamble is found in the will of his son William, and, with some minor variations, that of his other son Henry also.[23] Miss Luxton makes much of this, and points out that she has found no other examples of this kind in any of the wills of the inhabitants in the west of the Midlands outside the parish of St. Michael's in Coventry in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury which she has examined.[24] However, this is not an unorthodox preamble, though it is unusual. As has already been said, there was nothing unCatholic in trusting in the merits of Christ's Passion for salvation, although it is more usually associated with Protestant beliefs. Moreover, this is followed by an unusually elaborate invocation of Mary and the saints, angels, etc. This very un-Lollard respect for Mary and the saints, angels, etc. bespeaks orthodox beliefs.

The rest of Pysford's will shows that he was completely orthodox in his religious beliefs. He requested burial in the Chapel of St. Katherine and St. John in St. Michael's 'before the ymage of saint John the Evangelist', which is a most unusual request for someone of Lollard beliefs or sympathies. He also made bequests to the crafts in Coventry, favouring those who maintained priests rather than those who did not, and those who supported a pageant on the Corpus Christi Day. He gave

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23. PCC, 9 Ayloffe; 22 Ayloffe; 37 Bodfelde.

24. Luxton, op.cit., 124.

as motive for his bequests to these crafts 'the augmentation of divine service of god or the contynuance of the laudable customes of the Citie'. It is unlikely that Pysford would have contributed to the 'augmentation' of masses and the support of the Corpus Christi Day celebrations in the city if he held a typically Lollard view of the sacrament of the altar! Moreover, he founded a full-blown chantry in St. Michael's, providing for an anniversary obit at the same time, and contributed large amounts of money to build the Rood Chapel adjacent to the Greyfriars church. These are not the actions of a Lollard. And Pysford cannot be accused of mere death-bed generosity or conversion to the Church. The Rood chapel was built with money he had given during his life, along with other sums to the Greyfriars.

Miss Luxton also identifies the individual Thomas Ford, the brother of William Ford, founder of Ford's almshouse, who was referred to by two of the accused. Robert Hatchet stated that 'Thome fforde' possessed a copy of the Old Testament, while 'Uxorem Bluet' stated that Roger Bromley was apprenticed to a 'M[agistra] fforde'.[25] Ford was made a warden in 1501, a sheriff in 1509 and a bailiff the following year, during which time he sat on the city council. However, his will of 1518 does not suggest any unorthodox religious beliefs, despite his apparent connection with the Lollard sect in Coventry. He bequeathed his soul to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and All Saints, provided for an anniversary obit in perpetuity and instructed his executors to make further provision for his soul as they saw fit, as well as bequeathing property to 'find' St. Anthony's Mass in St. Michael's.[26]

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25. LJRO, B/C/13, ff 7, 3.

26. LB, 600, 628, 629; PCC, 14 Ayloffe.

There are further unanswered questions about John Wigston, William Pysford the elder and Thomas Ford. All three were still alive at the time of the trials in 1511-12, yet none were apparently examined, for there is no evidence in either the Court Book or Blythe's Register that they were. One explanation might be that their examinations have failed to survive. There is some evidence to support this, for the Court Book is not quite complete. Several folios are missing. Blythe's Register is of little use here, for it is also incomplete. There are discrepancies between the numbers listed in the Court Book as having abjured and those entered into the Register.[27] While it must be admitted that it is possible that the missing folios contained the examinations belonging to these three individuals, it would be a considerable coincidence if this had happened. There is a possibility, therefore, that they were not examined, although there is no clear reason why they should not have been.

As well as those members of the ruling elite so far named, there were others not mentioned by Miss Luxton who were referred to by various of the accused as having been associated with the sect, including William Rowley, the husband of Alice Rowley, although it is nowhere stated he was involved with the sect himself. In the Court Book she is described as '<u>relict a William Rowley eiusdem civitatis Coventry nuper mercatoris</u>'.[28] The key to Rowley's identity lies in the description of him as a merchant, which puts him in a class above that of the rank and file of the sect. He was a draper by trade,

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27. The Court lists forty-five abjurations. The Register list forty-four. Nine of those listed in the Court Book do not appear listed in the Register.

28. LJRO, B/C/13, f 16.

elected warden in 1480, sheriff in 1485, mayor in 1492 and master of Trinity Guild in 1496.[29] The City Annals for 1492 state that the Jesus Mass in St. Michael's was suspended in this year, and the previous year, when John Wigston was mayor.[30] There is nothing to link these two men directly with the suspension of the Jesus Mass, but it must seem strange that, for the very two years in which it was suspended, mayors who were associated with the Lollard sect in the city were in office. The trouble is, however, that Rowley made a bequest to the Jesus altar in St. Michael's when he came to make his will seven years later in 1505, which is inconsistent with any involvement in the suspension of the Jesus Mass in 1492! Indeed, his whole will of 1505 reflects orthodox beliefs. He bequeathed his soul to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael and all saints, directing that his body should be buried in Our Lady's Chapel in St. Michael's. He made no provision for masses and prayers for his soul, but directed his wife Alice, who was named as executrix, and his son Thomas to make such provision as they thought best.[31] This is a typical Catholic will.

Rowley's will is of further interest because, among those who witnessed it were Thomas Bayly, who was referred to on a number of occasions by the accused in 1511-12. Roger Laudesdale stated that he '<u>habuisse varios libros</u>', and that he had had a conversation with him and his son in the former's house, some six years previously, so far as he could remember, on the subject of St. Mathew's Gospel. Alice Rowley deposed that she heard a '<u>M[agistra</u> Bayly' talking about a book on the Gospels. Thomas Wrixham admitted the articles against himself and said that he heard a conversation between '<u>Magistra Bayly</u>

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29. <u>LB</u>, 424, 528, 542, 587.

30. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, <u>op. cit.</u>, 223.

31. PCC, 5 Adeane.

et Robert filio eiusdem quod fuerit eiusdem opiniones'. Bayly was a mercer who, after being a chamberlain in 1476 and a sheriff in 1478, was elected mayor in 1487. Seven years later in 1494 he became Master of Trinity Guild. His will is not extant, but his name disappears from the official records after 1509, from which it may be assumed that he died about this time.[32]

The aforementioned Roger Laudesdale named two other members of the magisterial elite who were possibly involved with the Lollard sect in Coventry. He stated that he possessed a book 'de & super veteri iure in Anglice traductus', of which a copy was held by Joan Smyth, whom he describes as 'relict a Magistri Padlond nunc ante uxore M[agistri] Richard Smyth'. There is other evidence that Joan was a Lollard, such as the remarks made by Robert Hachet, who said that Joan Smyth was of the same opinions as him and described her in the same way as he did Laudesdale. Thomas Fletcher said the same thing as Hachet. Joan Smyth herself stated in her own deposition that she was 'uxor Richard Smyth civitatis Coventry, mercer, nuper relicta John Padlond de civitate, capper'. Since Joan Smyth named her late husband as John Padlond, and the other references give him the title of 'Magistra', it is not difficult to identify him. The only person to fit this description was a warden in 1484, a sheriff in 1489 and mayor in 1495. There is some difficulty with Joan Smyth's description of herself as his widow, however, since he was not dead at this time, and did not die until 1516! Richard Smyth, Joan Smyth's current husband, who appears to have been her third, was a warden in 1481 and mayor in 1508. His will is not extant, but from the official records it appears that he died

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32. LJRO, B/C/13, ff 6, 6, 18; LB, 424, 419, 532 - 3, 553.

some time after 1519 when his name is no longer found in them.[33] Both Padlond and Smyth were in a somewhat different position from those like them who were still alive at the time of the trials, because none of the accused claimed that they were involved with the sect. Despite their suspect connections, we must assume in their cases that this was why they were not examined.

Padlond's will of 1516 is extant. It reflects orthodox beliefs. He bequeathed his soul to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and all saints, directing that his body was to be buried in Holy Trinity beside that of his brother Thomas. He requested additional funeral services to be performed by the monks of the Charterhouse, the friars of both houses in the city and the Master of St. John's Hospital and his priests. He provided for no less than five obits to be kept severally by the Shermen and Tailors, the churchwardens of Holy Trinity, the priests of Trinity Guild, the monks of the Charterhouse and the friars of the Carmelite house. The latter, in return for the large contribution he had made to the building of their cloister wall, were to say mass daily for him as well.[34]

The last instance of an individual who belonged to the ruling group in Coventry, or who was on the edge of that group, is Roger Laudesdale himself. Laudersdale was one of two men evidently of a higher social position than the rest of the victims of the purge of 1511-12 who did abjure. The other was Balthasar Shuckborough of Napton Parish, who is described as '_generosus_'. Both signed their abjurations with a full signature in their own hands, the only two to do so.[35] The rest who abjured merely put their marks next to their

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33. LJRO, B/C/13, ff 5, 8, 4; LB, 518, 534, 553; ibid., 474, 619.
34. PCC, 15 Holder.
35. LJRO, B/C/13, ff 18, 22.

names. Laudesdale was the 'reader' of the sect. There are many references throughout the depositions of the accused to the effect that he read to those present at the meetings of the group, which was the way in which ideas were disseminated, and there are far more references to books in his deposition than in any other.[36] We can place his family on the edge of the ruling elite of the city on the evidence of the career of his relation Richard Laudesdale, who was a warden of Coventry in 1495 and a bailiff in 1502, after which times his name disappears from the council records.[37] Joan Smyth's first husband was Richard Laudesdale, as she states in her deposition, who was the person who first taught her her beliefs about three years before his death.[38] It is more than likely that the two men were related, since they were both members of the same sect, and the literacy of one and the offices held by the other would put them in the same social group.

One member of the clergy has been identified as being involved with the group. Miss Luxton claimed James Preston, vicar of St. Michael's between 1488 and his death in 1507, as a member of the sect in Coventry. This she deduced from a statement made by Robert Hachet that '<u>vicarius iam mortuus viz Doctor Preston habuit librum ab eo de nova lege</u>'. Preston fits the description and the facts well. He was a DD and disposed of a number of books, perhaps part of a larger collection, by his will.[39] Miss Luxton points out that the preamble to his will anticipates the Protestant form. He bequeathed his soul

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36. <u>ibid</u>., f 4, 6, 7; <u>passim</u>., 5.

37. <u>LB</u>, 563, 601.

38. LJRO, B/C/13, f 4.

39. See above, 44I.

'with all the powers thereof to Almighty God in whose image and likeness it pleased Him of His most merciful goodes to make it, and with the most precious blodd of His only begotten son most lovingly to redeem it, beseeching Him to receive my said soul into the number of righteous persons and to be delivered from the everlasting danger of the pains of Hell not by my merits but by the abundant goodness of Him and His great mercy in which I have most singularly trusted, and in the merits and prayers of that most precious singular comfort and help of that glorious Archangel Saint Michael and in all the Holy Company of heaven, And in the suffrage of all Holy Church'. But the invocation of the saints and the rest of Preston's will reflects orthodox religious beliefs. He provided for a distribution to the poor in Coventry on the day of his burial, and for a distribution to be made to them on the anniversary of his death in perpetuity. There were also other bequests to the poor in various parts of the country, including parishes in Yorkshire, Oxfordshire and Hampshire. He made a number of bequests to the religious houses in Coventry, with the exception of the Greyfriars, for them to pray for him, his parents, brothers and benefactors, and bequests to all of the houses of friars in Oxford for the same purpose. He also left gifts to some of the University colleges in Oxford. Lastly, he made a bequest to a certain Thomas Stretton, a chaplain and scholar, perhaps of the university, to pray for him.[40]

Miss Luxton also points out that Preston's will shows a close association between him and some of the ruling elite mentioned in the examinations. William Pysford the elder was made a supervisor of his will, and Richard Cooke was a witness to it. The association between these men is further attested to by the fact that Pysford

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40. PCC, 22 Adeane.

was an overseer of Cooke's will. Preston's will also reveals a close relationship between him and the brothers William and Thomas Ford, whom he refers to in each case as '<u>cognato meo</u>', and to whom he made bequests. William Ford was an overseer of his will along with Pysford, and also appears as an overseer of Cooke's will with him. The connection between Ford and Preston is nowhere more striking than in the fact that the preambles to both their wills are identical. Did Ford draw up his will with Preston's assistance?

Preston was not the only cleric whose name was mentioned by the accused in the course of the trials. A Dr. Alcock of Ibstock, Leicestershire was stated to be a member of the sect by Robert Hachet, who was involved in carrying books to William Kent, curate of Stoney Stanton in Leicestershire. They were the subject of a letter from Blythe to the bishop of Lincoln on 3 November 1511. Hachet also mentioned another priest, a certain '<u>Radulphus Sher</u>'. There was a chantry priest of Holy Trinity in 1522 called Ralph Shore, who may be the same individual. If he was, then we not only have members of the ruling elite of the city involved in the sect who were alive at the time of the trials, but also a priest, and similarly, there is nothing to suggest he was examined. Thomas Bowd, vicar of Holy Trinity by 1499 to 1508, was also mentioned in the course of the trials. John Spon deposed that John Gest senior gave a copy of the Old Testament in English into the safe keeping of this vicar. He did not say that Bowd was a member of the sect, however.[41]

Now, there is a contradiction in the evidence presented. On the one

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41. LJRO, B/C/13, f 7, 2, 24, 7; CRO Access. 24. f 98; LJRO, B/C/13, f 7.

hand we have that of the reports of the accused that some members of the ruling elite of Coventry were members of the Lollard sect there. On the other we have the evidence of many of the latter's wills and lifetime bequests showing complete loyalty to the old religion suggesting emphatically that they were not. Perhaps the procedures adopted by Blythe when conducting the examinations of the accused provide a clue as to how this conflicting evidence might be reconciled.

The most damaging evidence against the members of the ruling elite are claims in the examinations that they were actually members of the sect and held Lollard views. The accused were constantly pressed in their interrogations to name others who were members of the sect, and we must remember that even familiarity with suspected heretics was an offence in the eyes of the Church. The accused would have been inclined perhaps to disclose not only those who were involved, but also those who they thought might be involved. Besides the examinations and abjurations of the real heretics, therefore, stand the examinations of others whose names were mentioned in the course of the trials who, upon examination, were found to have had nothing to do with the sect. In all twenty one people were examined who were found to be innocent of heretical beliefs. It cannot be assumed, therefore, that everyone named in the course of the trials was a member of the sect, including those members of the ruling elite.

The reason why members of the ruling elite were named at all was perhaps due to Blythe's preoccupation with the books the group possessed. He believed strongly that he could detect and wipe out the sect if he found all its books, and every effort was made to discover them by close questioning of the accused and the application of considerable pressure where necessary: he favoured some time in prison for those

who did not co-operate. In his letter to Bishop Smith of Lincoln about Dr. Alcock carrying books to William Kent in Leicestershire, Blythe said to him: 'I praie god ye may cum to the seid books ffor by such ther be many corrupted they will not confess but by payne of prisonment And by such meanes I haue gete to my hands righte many dampnable books'.[42] This accounts for the many references to books in the examinations.[43] Perhaps the accused told him not only of books owned by the sect but of books they knew to be in the possession of anyone, which could easily include people who were nothing to do with the sect. It is striking that at least one reference to each member of the ruling elite apparently involved with the sect concerned books that they owned. The ruling elite was composed of the wealthy

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42. ibid., f 24.

43. The majority of books mentioned were translations of Scripture. On two out of three occasions on which the Old Testament was mentioned, the copies were English translations (ibid., ff 5, 6, 7). There is one mention of a copy of the Psalms (ibid., f 6), three references to the apochryphal 'Thobit' (ibid., f 5, 16, 17). There are three references to the Gospels generally (ibid., ff 8, 20, 25), two to the Gospel of Matthew (ibid., ff 5, 8) and two to that of John (ibid., ff 6, 8). The Acts is mentioned once (ibid., f 5), the Epistles generally three times (ibid., ff 8, 20, 21), three of the Epistles of Paul generally (ibid., f 7, 10, 11) and one of Paul's Epistle 'de caritate' - presumably I Corinthians (ibid., d 25). There are two references to commentaries, one on the Epistles of Paul (ibid., f 5) and the other on the Gospels and Epistles (ibid., f 8). The Epistle of James receives one mention (ibid., f 6) and the Apocalypse one also (ibid., f 20). By far the most popular work seems to have been the Ten Commandments which receives no less than six mentions (ibid., ff 5, 6, 8, 11, 17, 21).

citizens who were able to afford books, and so it is not surprising that they should be singled out in this way. The accused might have known about them in a variety of ways, by report from someone else, after seeing them in the owners house or perhaps because they worked for them. Claims that members of the ruling elite were actually members of the sect might have been deduced from knowledge that they owned books.

Accepting that members of the ruling elite owned a considerable number of books between them, two questions have to be answered. The first is, were all the books they possessed heretical? It was claimed that the books owned by Wigston and Pysford were 'beautiful books of heresy', but none of them were named. Thomas Ford was said to own a copy of the Old Testament, but there is nothing to indicate it was an English version. Richard Cooke is known to have possessed books, because Robert Hachet said so, but we do not learn what books they were from his examination. It is only because Cooke disposed of his books in his will that we know he possessed two English Bibles, which must have been 'Lollard' Bibles, and a copy of Ludolphus of Saxony's Vita Jhesu Christi, a traditional devotional work. His collection was clearly a mixture of forbidden books and traditional devotional works. Surely the fact that he had possessed not one but two English Bibles would have been cause for comment by Hachet, assuming that Cooke was a member of the sect and not just a person Hachet knew to be a book-owner?

The second question is, does mere possession of forbidden books necessarily mean that the owner was unorthodox? It is possible that the owner of heretical works did not know that they were forbidden. Retrospectively, we can be clearer about things than perhaps

contemporaries were: the Church had outlawed English translations of the Scriptures at the time of Wycliffe; the vast majority of laymen who showed knowledge of the Bible in the vernacular were Lollards and therefore there is an implicit connection between the possession of such works and Lollard heresy. For contemporaries things may not have been so cut and dried. The only way we can reconcile the ownership of suspect books with the evidence of the wills and lifetime bequests of apparently complete loyalty to the old religion is by assuming that the owners were innocent of any heterodox intent. In other words, they cannot be labelled as crypto-Lollards.

That this is a correct interpretation is suggested by Richard Cooke's action in bequeathing his two English Bibles to Holy Trinity in Coventry and Walsall church. To have knowingly bequeathed heretical books to such important churches would have been foolhardy indeed. Moreover, surely a true Lollard would not have disposed of English Bibles in this way - first for fear of exposure, secondly because he would have wanted these precious works to remain with the sect. Cooke's action implies innocence. Many others of Coventry's ruling elite who were thought to be Lollard sympathisers because of the books they owned were probably innocent also. As their wills show, they were traditional orthodox Catholics.

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Some of those found guilty in 1511-12 were not sincere in their abjurations, and went about trying to win new converts to their heresy. The ecclesiastical authorities maintained their vigilance to prevent the sect re-forming, however, and on 22 May 1515 a certain William Borodall, aged twenty-one, the servant of a hatmaker in the city, was examined after he had confessed certain things to Thomas Orton, the vicar of Holy Trinity. He stated that his parents, Nicholas and

Margaret, had persuaded and induced him not to believe in the sacrament of the altar, nor to receive it, and not to be confessed for his sins, 'quia deus non erat in sacramento illo'. Nevertheless, he wanted to be confessed, and so went to a brother of the Greyfriars, but the latter refused to hear his confession, whereupon he went to Thomas Orton, vicar of Holy Trinity, for the same purpose. It seems that, having heard his confession, Orton reported him to the ecclesiastical authorities. At his examination, Borodall stated that 'patrem suum dedisse ad viii annos elapsos ei in mandatis ut accederet ad Laundesdale propter cibaria et ad Hachet pro calcies', and that he knew his parents to have had many conversations with Robert Hachet and Thomas Banbrook, with whom his mother was a servant.[44]

The outcome of Borodall's confession is not known. In the normal course of things his parents would have been required to abjure their heresies or suffer burning, while Hachet, Laudesdale and Banbrook would have suffered burning automatically as relapsed heretics. However, in Hachet's case this did not happen immediately, as we shall see. What happened to the other two is not known. One of the most significant things about the episode, however, is the fact that Borodall rejected the teachings of his parents, and freely denounced them, which might be an indication that he was not interested in the heresies of his parents' generation. If it is true, it underlines the point already made, namely, that Lollardy in Coventry was essentially a late-fifteenth-century phenomenon, and that it did, indeed, belong to an older generation.

On the same day as Borodall was examined, a certain Ralph Lowe, who was a servant to Thomas Rowley, late a sheriff of the city in

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44. P. Heath (ed.). Bishop Geoffrey Blythe's Visitations c 1515 - 1525, (Collections for a History of Staffordshire, 4th Series, vii, 1973), 101.

1513-14, reported that, while following her upon the instructions of his master, he saw Joan Smith come out of Laudesdale's house, presumably meaning Roger Laudesdale. It appears that he had been rather clumsy in his efforts to follow her, however, and she had realised what he was doing. They exchanged words. He told her whose servant he was and she told him that she had gone to Laudesdale's house 'to my sistre for to have ease of my payn'.[45] The outcome in this case is again unknown. It is not without its own significance, however, for it is almost certain that Thomas Rowley was the son of William Rowley, whose mother was one of the Lollards found guilty in 1511-12. Like others of his generation he, too, seems to have rejected the heresy despite his family's involvement with it.

The surveillance of abjured heretics continued and resulted in further trials in 1519, when eight individuals who had been found guilty by Blythe seven years before were persecuted as relapsed heretics. Before the discovery of the Court Book, the only authorities for this third persecution were Foxe and the City Annals.[46] However, a condemnation of one of the eight, Robert Silkeby, was found interleaved between the folios of the Court Book, which provided welcome corroboration of the story.[47] There is some disagreement between Foxe and the compiler of the Annals as to the identity of the eight individuals, although both sources name Silkeby as one of them. Foxe gives the names and occupations of seven of them as 'Mistress Smith, widow; Robert Haches, a shoemaker; Archer, a shoemaker; Hawkins, a shoemaker; Thomas Bond, a shoemaker; Wrigsham, a glover; Lansdale,

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45. loc. cit.

46. Foxe, IV, 557 - 8; City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 225.

47. LJRO, B/C/13, f 9.

a hosier'. To this list must be added the name of Silkeby, who was styled by Foxe 'Robert Silkeb'. The Annals agree for the most part, but some new names are introduced which have not been noted before. However, in this the Annals seem to be wrong, and Foxe's list of names looks like the correct ones, because all the eight eventually suffered death by burning, a penalty reserved for relapsed heretics. Had any previously unconvicted individuals been tried at this time, they would have been unlikely to suffer the extreme penalty for a first offence. Seven of the eight were burnt together in the Little Park at Easter time in 1519. Silkeby contrived to escape somehow, and avoided recapture for the next two years. He was eventually apprehended, and burnt on 13 January 1521. All the goods and chattels belonging to these eight were forfeited, but Silkeby's wife obtained in some way a grant of her husband's property in 1523.[48]

The burning of Robert Silkeby was the last act in the persecution of members of the Lollard sect in Coventry. There is no evidence that Lollardy persisted in the city after this year; and evidence of further persecutions or of any surveillance being carried out on suspected persons. Many of those who had been persecuted in 1511-12 would, by 1521, have been well advanced in years, if they were still alive, while the younger members would almost all have been in middle-age or approaching it. If we deduce the ages of those burnt in 1519 and 1521 from the estimates given seven and nine years before, the youngest would have been William Hawkins at forty-eight. Thomas Wrixham would have been fifty. Robert Silkeby, who was the same age, would have been fifty-two in 1521. Robert Hatches, who evidently was not tried in 1515, was the second oldest at seventy, while Roger

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48. LP, III, ii, 2993.

Laudesdale was seventy-three. If we calculated the ages of others persecuted in 1511-12, supposing them to be still alive in the early 1520s, then among the oldest would have been Thomas Flessher at seventy, Thomas Warde at seventy-three, Richard Gest at seventy and Mathew Markland at sixty-eight. Whether or not any of these individuals were still alive at this time is not known. Whether they, or any of the younger ones who were more likely to be alive still, were still active in their heresies is not known, but if they had been, presumably the surveillance by the ecclesiastical and secular authorities would have uncovered them and they would have stood trial as relapsed heretics with the rest. The sect was moribund, therefore, by the early 1520s. Its inevitable loss of membership through old age, coupled with the lack of young recruits to take their place meant that it would only have been a matter of time before the sect ceased to exist. By the early 1520s the sect no longer posed a threat to orthodoxy, if it ever had done.

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The Lollards bequeathed no legacy of religious dissent to the city that was to reveal itself in the early years of the Reformation. Coventry did not become a centre of religious radicalism and ferment in these years, and there is nothing to suggest that there was any move to embrace Protestantism. Indeed, there is no evidence of religious disturbance at all until the early 1540s, when Catholic orthodoxy had been reasserted and the progress of the Reformation arrested by the Act of Six Articles. In 1542 thirteen citizens were indicted for offences against the Act upon charges brought by one of the vicars of Coventry. The case does not seem to have reflected religious divisions in the city, however, for the charges would never

have been brought if the accused had not first reported the vicar for something or other, which resulted in his being examined by a 'commission'. Unfortunately, the nature of the commission is not known. The charges it seems were brought by him as an act of personal revenge, and were perhaps groundless. The story runs as follows.

On 10 July 1542 a writ was issued to the sheriffs of Coventry by David Pole, Christopher Waren, mayor, Richard Heryng, John Jett, Cuthbert Joynour and Baldwin Porter, justices, for the return of a grand jury at Coventry on 27 July next to inquire into certain reported offences against the Act of Six Articles. There are extant ten separate indictments of six of those accused, out of a total of thirteen people who stood in danger of the court. The indictments take the form of reported remarks by the accused overheard at various times and places by unnamed individuals, and all are marked by the precision of their dating. Not all the indictments concern the Act directly. Some recite deprecatory remarks about the Church in general, the Virgin and St. Michael's church in Coventry.[49]

Thomas Rogers, cardmaker, was indicted upon two counts. He was supposed to have said to his wife on 12 February 1542, 'I comande the not to cry of our ladie for every help she cane not help the', and on 12 January following, 'I woll never be confessed of a prest while I liff'. Richard Maxfield, draper, was indicted for apparently having said on 12 July 1542 in Holy Trinity, which would be two days after the writ was issued, that 'The bodie of our lorde Jhesu christ is not now in the canapee ------(?) on the high Aulter ther, it is not ther at ony tyme but at the tyme of Concecracion thereof by a priest beyng

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49. KB 9/129, ff 1 - 12.

at masse'. He was also said to have claimed that five others of the accused, named as Banwell, Mathewe, Crowe, Pynnyng and Pie agreed with him. It would have been very foolish for Maxfield to speak as he did only two days after an inquest had been called for, but, that is apparently what he did. One indictment of George Mathewe survives, which states that on 20 December 1541 he was heard to say 'I trust to live to se all prists to have wyfs and I am sorie that ever I sayed our ladies mattens or salve Regina And I trust to live till all Crosses Chalesses & all other ornaments & juells of Churches of silver shalbe sold & put into ruyne & noon suche to be used in the Churche'.[50]

Richard Banwell, draper, and his wife Alice were indicted on one and two counts respectively. He was reported to have said on 17 April 1542 'I had as leve be confessedd to a poost as a priest, And that he saying onelie for feare of the damages of the Kings Acte of parliament therof made wolde never be shriven of a prist while he lived'. His wife was accused of saying on 18 April 1542 that 'A preist cane not brynge to me my savior & maker', which belief she apparently confessed her husband also held. The same day she was also supposed to have said that, 'I had as leve be shriven at a poost as at a prist for all prists be Knaves & I woll have no prist to Be with me at my latter ende, for auricular confession is of no force & ought not to be used, And I cane say a gospell in my house for me & my servants aswell as any priest cane'. Again it was said that she had stated that her husband was of the same belief.[51]

The remaining three indictments all pertain to John Pynnyng,

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50. ibid., ff 3 - 4, 5, 11.

51. ibid., ff 12, 9 - 10.

draper. First, he apparently said on 17 January 1542, 'It were vercy well doon & I wolbe that the parishe Churche of Seynt Michell in Coventre is And that ther were never a parishe Churche in England for I could take my rights upon a hill in the feild as well as in a Churche, for the parishe Churches do no good but meyntagn a meny of Knave prists to Spend mennes goods'. Then on 8 July 1542 he was said to have asserted in the Drapers Chapel in St. Michael's, 'I am the worste when I come unto the Churche & looke upon the images ther, for thei be Idolls And I woll give no reverence to the Crucifix oneles I see two quiyck fyngers of fleshe neyled theron And I will not pray to our ladie ner desire any thynge of her for she haith nothynge to gyve her cane give no thyng ner ther is no meane place of purgaccon I had aslete give a peny to be hanged as to give a peny to be prayed for when I am deid'. Richard Banwell, George Mathewe, Robert Pie, minstrel, Robert Crowe, capper, Baldwin Clerke, weaver, William Ingram, clothier, William Redbourne, Thomas Rogers and Richard Bradeley, cardmakers, were all, according to the indictment, said by Pynnyng to be of the same beliefs. On 12 July 1542 he apparently said, it seems to the jury itself, 'maisters what make you of the sacrament of the Alter or how take yow it I do take it but as a floure And I hadd as leve turne my Arse to it as my face'.[52]

Ten of the accused secured a writ of certiorari for the return of the indictments to the King's Bench, on the grounds that some of the jury would testify that they read differently from what the inquest had found. The names of the ten included one William Waters, whose name does not appear in the surviving indictments, but neither Bradeley's,

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52. ibid., ff 6 - 8.

Clerk's or Redbourne's. The mayor disobeyed the writ, however, and so the accused petitioned Star Chamber. They claimed the complicity of the jury in the matter, and stated that many of them 'confessed that thei gave up no such verdict or presentment as conteined anie woordes of sufficient cause of indictment, And yt thei the iustices and iudges in that the said comission of vi articles unrightuooslie and untruelie framed in fourme of lawe indictments contrarie to the verdict of inquest'. The mayor, who had refused to obey the writ, was described by the accused as their 'chief and principall persequtor', who had 'with his owne mouth confessed to such as will avowe the same that he would never have medled agenst yor said orators nor that this matter had never bene begoon if the comission agenst the vicar had never coomen downe'. This was the nub of the matter and though it is nowhere explained just what had happened, there is also an oblique reference to it by the accused in their petition to Star Chamber. They claimed that 'for that yor said orators truelie discharging ther conscience gave evidence on the Kings behalf agenst the vicar of Coventre, yor said orators be thus vexed and for none other cause'.[53]

The vicar nearly got away with the whole thing, because the accused were hard pressed to maintain their counter-suit. The suit against them was paid for out of the common box of the city and not by the vicar himself. The accused stated that the mayor and some aldermen, instead of bearing the costs themselves, 'consented in the counsell of the said Citie to beare the coosts of sute agenst yor said orators of the comen Boxe of the said Citie And not of ther owne goodes'. The accused could not match this, and were at a serious financial disadvantage. The mayor and aldermen were well aware of this and

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53. STAC 2/3/61, f 1.

hoped that their suit would therefore not be challenged. If the accused could not maintain a counter-suit they would be declared guilty by default. The accused pointed out in their petition that the former, 'being suer that every of yor said orators be poore men as idede thei be, utterlie determyne and purpose to delay and prolong the matter, And to put yor said orators in the meane tyme to trooble and vexation, in such wise, that yor said poore orators having no help of the comen box ..... shalbe utterlie fatigat impoverished and so extremelie undone, that thei shall never be hable to continue or trie ther poore truethes and honesties in this ther said sute'. They requested therefore, that they be granted another certiorari. and that a commission be granted 'to soome of the worshypfull gentlemen in the shier, there to examine by othe and other wise' the recent inquest and the claims set out in their petition.[54] There are no further records of the suit, but presumably the accused won their case.

Very little is known about the backgrounds of the accused. None of them held any civic offices, even in a minor capacity, and so the dispute did not represent a struggle for power within the city government. The accused were not necessarily poor, however, indeed, there are indications that some of them were fairly wealthy. Richard Banwell was the son of Thomas Banwell, draper, who was chamberlain in 1513, sheriff in 1515, bailiff the following year and mayor in 1524, so he came from a family of the magisterial elite.[55] His own personal wealth is indicated by the fact that he maintained servants, as is indicated by the charge against his wife. That she probably did not say what she was accused of having said does not detract from this

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54. loc. cit.

55. LB. 637, 645, 686.

assessment. The wills of only two of the accused survive, which precludes using them as a guide to the religious beliefs of the group as a whole. Mathewe's will adopts a neutral position. He bequeaths his soul to God alone. There are no religious bequests and no requests for masses and prayers for his soul, although he does provide for a distribution of alms the day of his burial. He bequeathed 2s. each to 'iii servant maydens that wachyd with me' in his will of 1545, made, it seems, at a time when he was seriously ill, which indicates that, like Banwell he was relatively wealthy.[56] The other will belongs to Richard Maxfield, and reflects orthodox Catholic beliefs. Made in 1544, after bequeathing his soul to the hands of God, Our Lady St. Mary and the Holy Company of Heaven, it directs that his body is to be buried in St. Lawrence's Chapel next to his daughter's, to which altar amongst others, he makes various bequests. He instructed his wife as his executrix to provide for the health of his soul after her discretion.[57] Neither Mathewe nor Maxfield appear to have had any obvious Protestant sympathies, therefore.

The religious beliefs of the aldermen can be more readily established since a greater number of wills belonging to them have survived. Many have already been discussed, and they show that in the late 1530s and early 1540s the city council in Coventry was made up predominantly of Catholic-minded individuals.[58] The majority of the council had to be of this persuasion for the decision to be taken to support the case against the accused from the common box of the city. To that extent the evidence from the wills and from the events of 1542

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56. LJRO, Mathewe, George, 11/1/45

57. Ibid., Maxfield, Richard, 13/10/44.

58. See above, 85-102.

are mutually supporting. To this might be added that Christopher Waren, the mayor this year, was a 'Catholic partisan', for some ten years later he was to be entrusted with housing the Duke of Suffolk in his house in the city for a few days after the failure of the latter's rebellion in 1554.[59] Such a responsibility would only have been given to one of unquestionable faith. It seems, therefore, that the dispute in 1542 was between Catholic and Catholic, and to explain it requires us to go back to the assumption made about the nature of the commission which examined the vicar to begin with.

The vicar was almost certainly John Ramridge of St. Michael's. This is suggested first by the fact that John Pynnyng's supposed remarks were about his church rather than Holy Trinity, and secondly by what else is known about him. The complaint against the vicar is not explained, but it probably concerned a charge of supporting papal authority, with which Ramridge was charged a few years later. The dispute in 1542 can be seen as growing out of the recent 1539 Act of Six Articles. Ramridge may have felt himself more able to assert his own extremely conservative position in his church as a result of the Act, and it was this which the accused, all, it seems, parishioners of St. Michael's, found unacceptable, and so sought a commission to investigate him. Ramridge's use of the Act to persecute those who opposed him indicates that he saw the Act as a welcome measure to enforce adherence to his traditional Catholicism. His views were then shared by many of the ruling elite of the city, who also favoured the Catholic reaction. He probably antagonised the accused by overreaching himself. If he thought the Act permitted him to speak in

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59. See below, 525.

favour of the Pope or once again of the Roman Church, he forgot that the Royal Supremacy was still effective, and reckoned without the dislike of the accused of Roman jurisdiction.

The year 1542 was not the last time that Ramridge found himself at odds with some of the inhabitants of Coventry. The City Annals for 1544 state that in that year, by his procurement, one Thomas Saunders was falsely accused of heresy, for which he was sent up to London where he laid in the King's Bench prison for three quarters of a year. This entry in the Annals is corroborated by a letter to the Privy Council informing them that Saunders had been released. It went on to relate that he had been committed to prison on 9 May previously 'for a boke touching religion noted with his hands', but 'bicause that boke extended not to any suche offence as appeared agaynts tharticles, and that he had so long remayned in prison, he was this daye uppon a good lesson dispeched out of prison'. Here is another example of someone suffering persecution by Ramridge for something of which he was not guilty, and in the same manner as the thirteen in 1542. It is to be wondered if Saunders was of the same opinion as the thirteen. What is clear from both these examples is that Ramridge was a vindictive man. The tables were turned, however, when his own position was threatened in 1547. The City Annals for this year state that he and his parish priest Henry Hybert, who was curate of St. Michael's, were forced to recant their popish errors.[60]

What evidence we have of religious disturbance in the city during the early years of the Reformation, therefore, centres on the figure

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60. T. Sharpe, Illustrative Papers on the History and Antiquities of the City of Coventry ...., (Birmingham, 1871), II-I2; APC, I, I542-I547, 277; City Annals, CRO, Access. 2/F, f 24.

of John Ramridge, vicar of St. Michael's, and apparently concerns his support of papal authority which offended a small group of his parishioners. There is no evidence his views were widely opposed. Indeed, the support he obtained from the city council suggests that his views might have met with general approval. The evidence suggests that there was widespread adherence to the old religion up to the end of Henry VIII's reign.

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There is little evidence of the conversion of the inhabitants of Coventry to Protestantism. There were apparently no disturbances and no disputes between individuals of a religious sort which might provide some indication of the progress of Protestantism during Edward's reign. The citizens appear to have accepted the new religion without voicing any opposition. There is one example of a Catholic layman who resisted attempts by a Protestant clergyman to convert him to the new religion, however, as the following story shows, which is undoubtedly representative of more of the inhabitants than just this one individual.

The story comes from two letters which are apparently all that remains of a lengthy exchange on the nature of the Eucharist. The first is from the Protestant clergyman to the Catholic layman. The second is the latter's reply to the former's letter. Neither of them is dated nor signed. It is impossible to identify the layman, but not perhaps the clergyman. The letters were found in the vestry of Holy Trinity, which suggests he belonged to that church. Moreover, he was evidently well educated, as, indeed, was the layman, for the letters contain Latin quotations from the Fathers used by both men to support their differing interpretations of the Eucharist. The

most likely candidate is William Benet, vicar of Holy Trinity between 1546 and 1554, the counterpart of John Ramridge at St. Michael's.

The clergyman's, or Benet's, view was that the Eucharist was a mere remembrance of Christ's death, while the layman's was that of an orthodox Catholic. In the former's letter there are quotations from Ambrose, Chrysostom, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, from Augustine's De Civitate Dei and Eusebius. He claimed that 'Cyrill, Anthanasius, Hilary, Isichius and Paulinus be off the same mynde, yea & so is Theophilactus in his comentery apon st paul to ye hebrewes, but wat nede I to answere or wryte to yow that wil not regard yt, for my paynes ar but lost when yow wyl not cherybly receve yt. Use patiens quieytnes & cheryte & I wyl ever be glade & redy to commune with you as Knowyth Christ who Kepe yow'. The layman's response was to give some quotations of his own from Ambrose and Chrysostom, which reiterated his own view, and then conclude, 'Acording to Charitie, As yow have written to me I dessier yow to be content for I of my pitye have in Charitye what soo ever I sayd to yow or yow to me & I dessier yow acording to yower promis in yowre writing yt yow will doo like manner, but As for to medill with you or in yowr cure or in yowr church I will not medull but I will go to other churches & sarve god quietli wich I pray god I may'.[61] Perhaps the layman went across the way to St. Michael's where John Ramridge officiated. The latter's Catholic beliefs were well known, and while it is unlikely that he continued to celebrate mass as he had done before Edward VI's accession, perhaps the atmosphere was more in keeping with the old form.

Perhaps the most significant thing about this disagreement is

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61. WRO, Holy Trinity Parish, DR/801/12.

that the protagonists agreed to differ. They parted upon what can only be described as amicable terms. There was apparently no malice between them, but even a respect for the others opinion. The layman could have been forced to recant his beliefs, but there is nothing to suggest that he was reported to the authorities for his beliefs, and given the temper of the two letters it seems unlikely that he was. The episode shows that adherents of the old and new could live together amicably without constantly being at odds, and that there was some degree of toleration between them. The important point here, however, was that the layman pursued the dictates of his conscience quietly and not openly. This fact comes through in both letters, and it seems to suggest that as long as this was understood punitive measures against dissenters would not be taken .

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Given the dearth of evidence, it is impossible to say with any degree of certainty how much progress Protestantism had made in Coventry by the end of Edward Vl's reign. That some had embraced the new faith is without doubt, but the extent to which the city had undergone conversion cannot be known. Therefore any estimate of the extent of conversion must rest upon the evidence provided by the events of Mary's reign as the progress of Protestantism was arrested and Catholicism restored, which, for the most part, concerns the persecution of an extremist minority. Again, we have very little indication of what the majority of citizens thought.

Coventry, along with the rest of the country, declared for Mary at her accession, but there is perhaps some indication that it was unhappy about doing so, and might have preferred to declare for Lady Jane Grey. This is suggested by the City Annals, two versions of which refer to

the manner of Mary's acceptance. A somewhat brief version states, 'K. Edward the 6th dyed, the lady Jane Gray proclaimed in some places, butt it was refused att Coventry and the Lady Mary proclaimed by the Mayor'. The other, somewhat fuller version, states, 'This yeare the Duke of Northumberland sent to have the Lady Jane proclaimed, but the Maior, being ruled by the Recorder, would not proclaim her, but haveing order, speedily proclaimed Queen Mary'.[62] Is there some suggestion here that there was a division within the city council? The mayor is said to have been 'ruled' by the recorder, which may mean that there was some question as to whether the city proclaimed Lady Jane Grey or Mary. The recorder at this time was Edward Saunders. He most probably reminded the mayor of Mary's legitimate claim to the throne, and the illegality, therefore, of proclaiming Lady Jane Grey. The Annals might suggest that the council was thinking of proclaiming Lady Jane Grey, perhaps because there was a predominance of Protestants among its membership by this time, but other evidence suggests the Catholics were still in the majority. Saunders was probably doing little more than reminding the council of Mary's legitimate right to the throne.

The city was made ready to defend itself and its position if called upon to do so. The City Annals state that 'a great store of armour' was collected in the city, while further evidence is to be found among various craft accounts for the repair of harness, and the paying of the watches that were maintained for at least two days and nights.[63] It was evidently a time of confusion and uncertainty, as the Annals go on to say, 'There was a cry in Coventry that the Cittie was fireing in

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62. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 228-29.

63. ibid., 229; For example, Smiths, Reader, c7, f 83.

four parts, which caused the Common Bell to be rang, and the walls to be manned, and the gates to be made up, but there was noe hurt'.[64] The city was jittery, and rumours were given more credence at this time than they might have done in more settled times, with the resulting panic referred to in the Annals. As nothing came of Northumberland's attempt to install Lady Jane Grey on the throne, the city would have soon settled down, and returned to normality. The peace was shattered again only a few months later, however, by Suffolk's rebellion, in which a handful of Coventry citizens were closely involved.

The evidence of these citizens' involvement in the rebellion is derived mostly from the deposition of Thomas Rampton, secretary to Suffolk, who was sent to Coventry to discover the extent of support for him there. Rampton, we are told later, had been led to believe that Coventry would be supportive. As we shall see, this was untrue. He was despatched thither on 25 January 1554, the day on which Suffolk himself fled London to Leicester. But he did not arrive in the city until Monday 29 January. The events he referred to in his deposition took place on this day and the morning of the following day, before he left the city. His deposition tells a story of a conspiracy that was poorly supported by the citizens of Coventry, and had little direction, both of which failings might have been rectified if the conspiracy had attracted any local figures of importance. There was no man of substance involved in the conspiracy to give it direction and purpose, and act as a leader whom the mass of the people might follow.

Upon his arrival in Coventry, Rampton sought out those who he had been led to believe represented a group within the city sympathetic

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64. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, loc. cit.

to Suffolk's cause. To begin with he looked for and found one Thomas Corbyt, who he describes as 'my old famylyer'. The two of them were soon joined by Richard Astleyn and 'oon frauncess', presumably one Francis Symcockes mentioned in the pardons lists.[65] Little is known about Corbyt and Symcockes. Astleyn, a haberdasher, was one of four men who were arrested on All Hallows Day 1553 'for ther lewd and seditious behaviour' and subsequently were conveyed to London where they spent some time in the capital's prisons awaiting judgement before release in early 1554. The other three were John Careless, weaver, Thomas Wylcockes, fishmonger, and Baldwin' Clerc, weaver. The latter was also involved in the conspiracy at this time.[66]

Rampton showed Corbyt and Astleyn a proclamation written by Suffolk that was to be proclaimed at the auspicious moment, which received an enthusiastic response from the two men. He asked them if they thought the city would support Suffolk, and again received an enthusiastic response. They told him that 'the hole of this towne is at his comandment', to which they added prophetically, 'unles it be certayn of the Counsayle of the towne Maiy they consyder that yf good fellowes have the upper hand, ther extremyties heretofore showed wil be remembered'. Rampton picked them up on this point, asking how Suffolk could be sure of the city without the support of the city council, but he was blithely assured that, 'we are so many in nomber that they nor ther Counsayle shall never prevayle ffor we ar at the lest ten men to on of theym'.[67] There is perhaps a suggestion here that the city council was not dominated by Protestants.

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65. SP/11/3/20, f 1, and see below, 525.

66. APC., IV, 1552 - 1554, 368, 372.

67. SP/11/3/20, loc. cit.

Rampton seems to have been trying to establish the extent of the support in the city from these men, although it was not they whom he was instructed to contact. Feeling perhaps that he had gleaned enough from them, he asked to see one William Glover. Holinshed asserted that before Suffolk fled London for Leicester, he 'was persuaded that the citie of Coventrie would be opened to him, the more part of the citizens being thoroughlie bent in his favour', while Rampton explained that he wished to see Glover, because 'may Arraund was chiefly to hym'. The three said that Rampton was 'new com from London', a point which Glover confirmed himself.[68] Undoubtedly, it was, therefore, Glover from whom Suffolk had learnt that there was support for him in Coventry, and who was the leader of the conspiracy there. This was confirmed when Rampton produced a letter written by Suffolk, which he gave to Glover as a means of introducing himself. We are not told whether it was addressed to him personally.[69] Glover was one member of a family who were strong Protestants (his brother Robert was a martyr) and what is known of him and his family will be treated later.

Having established who he was, Rampton then told the assembled group, which by now also included Baldwin Clerk who had arrived with Glover, that he had been sent by Suffolk 'to practise with you and other to thentent he might understand howe he may be receyved here And whether the people of this town will Assyste hym or no in this quarrel for the defense of his Contrey'. Glover was as enthusiastic in his reply as the others had been before him. He assured Rampton that 'my lordes quarell is right well knowen, it is gods quarell let

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68. R. Holinshed, Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland, IV, (1808), 13.

69. SP/11/3/20, loc. cit.

hym com and make no staye for this towne is his owne, yea I will saye further to you this towne is most assuredly his owne I knoweth yt'. Clerk added his voice to Glover's, and declared with obvious religious zeal that Suffolk 'dyd cleave and styck to gods truth', from which remark Rampton stated that he 'noted hym to be a protestant And dyd confess the same of my lord with hym'.[70]

The conspirators had in fact allowed their enthusiasm to get the better of them and they had entered into a conspiracy without a thought for the practical considerations which such an undertaking required. When Rampton had been talking to Corbyt, Astleyn and Symcockes before the arrival of Glover and Clerk, they had unfolded their plan to him to take the castles of Kenilworth and Warwick, which they deemed a necessity, because 'ther might some other of the adverse partye have theym And from theme dayly aswell set fourth Skyrmyshes or cut of any Aydes', while Warwick had ten pieces of ordnance, which they considered 'most necessary and rquesytt to the furtherance of my lords enterprise'. When Rampton asked how they hoped to achieve all this, he was assured that there would be 'ynough that owt of Coventre wold take theym'. If that was not enough, they declared there and then that if he would 'go streight with theym they two with xxx or xl that they wold choose wold geave thattempt for ther takyng of theym Bothe'.[71]

After the arrival of Glover and Clerk, the discussion turned to the question of money for the enterprise. Clerk told Rampton that Suffolk 'had evil in on poynt', namely, that he had spoken openly that he had not above forty pounds to fund the venture. This, he said, would discourage those who would look for money from his hands. Glover,

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70. ibid., f 2.

71. ibid., f 1.

however, dismissed Clerk's remark and asserted that if Suffolk came to the city, 'ther will be money ynough for hym, I know he shall not want money, I know yt'. Perhaps Glover was trying to convince himself. Immediately afterwards he said that such news could not have come at a worse time, because he 'was not worse provyded of money a great whyles'. The considerable enthusiasm which the conspirators evidently had, could not compensate for the lack of material resources.[72]

So far the evidence of Rampton's deposition has been taken at face value. It leads us to wonder why he did not discontinue the association with the conspirators at this point. It should have been obvious that it was most unlikely to succeed. Rampton was urged, and agreed, however, to send word to Suffolk, by then at Leicester, to come with all speed. The conspirators wanted him to send his servant, William Burdet, at once, but Burdet said that he had not slept well the night before, and that he would sleep some before he went. If there had ever been a chance that the conspiracy might have succeeded, it was lost by this delay. Rampton suggested that Burdet should sleep for a short while and then leave, but he expressed reservations about him getting out of the city, since the gates would be shut. Glover assured him that there would be no problem but, when Burdet was ready to go, Rampton prevented him from doing so, because he feared that any attempt on Burdet's part to leave the city while the gates were shut would lead to the discovery of their plans and possible bloodshed: 'the holl matter at that tyme wold streight have broken owt, And so the uprore ones began I know yt could not be appeased without bludshed and the great hassard of the cheif and riche townes men'. Burdet did not finally leave until the gates of the city were

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72. ibid., f 2.

opened the next morning.[73]

The late departure of Burdet had ensured that the conspiracy would fail. When the conspirators learned that he had delayed his departure they were 'very sorrowful', and when Rampton asked why, since on the previous day they had been sure that Suffolk would have no problem in entering the city, he was told that 'it myght happen that uppon the quenes letters the Counsayle of the towne may geave A suddayn order', and that the council was going to meet that morning. Proclamations of Suffolk's treason had been read in the neighbouring towns, and the conspirators were probably worried that, once the proclamation had been read in Coventry, Suffolk would find that the city was against him. It was debated whether to 'set forth' Suffolk's own proclamation (which Rampton had) in the hope that the citizens would rise up in support of the duke, but again this was rejected by Rampton as such a step would put people 'in a styr' with possibly unwanted results. Clerk was of a similar mind, and said that if this was done then 'spoyle and peradventure distruccon of many of the Riche men' would probably result. He begged them to wait until Suffolk himself arrived, who would be 'better able by his presence to order the rude people', which he confessed 'passeth my power'. It was decided, however, to send a messenger to one Hudson, another of Rampton's familiars at Warwick about the taking of the castle there, but he had already been arrested by the Earl of Huntingdon's men, who had entered the area shortly before. The conspiracy was falling apart, and it was decided that Rampton himself should take word to Suffolk that all haste was necessary if they were to have any chance of success. So he left the city.[74]

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73. ibid., f 2 - 3.

74. ibid., f 3 - 4.

The deposition of another of Suffolk's secretaries, Thomas Bowyer, takes up the story from the time when Suffolk approached the city in the afternoon of Tuesday 30 January. He stated that Suffolk had received word that the city was 'verie desyrous to have him theare', and that the citizens had promised to give him financial assistance to the extent of giving him one hundred pounds, but that when he approached the city 'with six or seven horsemen' he found 'the gates weere Shut agaynste him, and theare everie man put of his herneys'.[75] Holinshed thought the gates were shut against Suffolk 'through comfort of the erle of Huntingdon', and he was probably right, unless the meeting of the city council in the morning had received letters from the Privy Council declaring Suffolk's treason. Either way, once the gates were shut against him the rebellion was over.[76]

The conspiracy was doomed to fail from the beginning. None of the conspirators was a man of substance, and had no right to claim that he spoke for the citizens of Coventry. The city council had declared for Mary some six months previously at the time of Northumberland's rebellion, and there was no reason why its members should have changed their minds now. Similarly, the magisterial elite as a class rejected involvement in the rebellion, whether or not they had welcomed Mary's accession or, now, the Spanish marriage. The conspiracy, regardless of its support among the humbler classes, could not have succeeded without the support of these classes. In

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75. SP/11/19, f 2; The craft accounts list payments for maintaining the watch: Drapers, CRO, Access. 154 (Daffern), f 34; Smiths Reader, c 7, f 83; Cappers, f 92; for the Carpenters and Dyers, see J. G. Nicholls (ed.), The Chronicle of Queen Jane and Queen Mary, (Camden Society, 1850), 125.

76. Holinshed, op. cit., 14

short, the aims and desires of the conspirators far surpassed their capabilities, which, they had misrepresented to Rampton from the beginning.

The authorities showed remarkable leniency with the conspirators. Suffolk was arrested shortly after he fled from the city, and after spending three days in the house of Christopher Waren in Coventry, he was taken to London.[77] The city maintained watches for about a week, as it had at the time of Northumberland's rebellion. Rampton was arrested soon after the failure of the rebellion and taken to London. On 24 February a letter was sent by the Privy Council to the Lieutenant of the Tower, instructing him to deliver Rampton to Robert Dickyn, John Sutton and Robert George, to be conveyed to Coventry to be 'further ordered' there.[78] The chronicler stated that Rampton 'was carried into the country to Coventry, ther to be arained and to suffer death'.[79] In the event he was pardoned, along with Glover, Symcockes and Astleyn on 26 October 1554.[80] There is no record of the arrests of Glover, Clerk, Astleyn, Symcockes and Corbyt. None appears to have been taken to London. Perhaps they were imprisoned locally until their pardon. Nothing at all is known about the fates of Clerk and Corbyt, however, who were apparently not included in the pardon.

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Persecution of the Protestants in Mary's reign did not begin in earnest until after the heresy laws had been re-imposed. Not until

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77. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 228.

78. APC, IV, 1552 - 1554, 399.

79. Nicholls, op. cit., 65

80. CPR Mary, II, 33.

November 1554, after Parliament had refused on two previous occasions, were the heresy laws, repealed by Edward VI, reintroduced. From January 1555 persecution began in earnest, and among those that were arrested and imprisoned and in some cases martyred were a number of Coventry citizens. Practically all that we know about them comes from an extensive number of letters exchanged between themselves and and with other Protestants, which are occasionally supplemented by other sources. The letters provide biographical details, reveal what their authors' beliefs were, indicate their links with other Protestants (which were very considerable, as we shall see) and provide insight into the nature and extent of Protestantism in the city as a whole. Though long since in print, these letters have not been widely used by historians.

One of the earliest letters to the Protestants in Coventry was written by John Bradford. This is dated 2 September 1554, and is addressed to Richard Hopkins and his wife, and 'other his faithful brethren and sisters'. The letter itself is couched in the form of a sermon, and so provides little information about the Protestant group within the city. It serves to identify Hopkins, however, who is described as a grocer.[81] Hopkins was elected sheriff shortly afterwards,[82] and on 27 January 1555 he was committed to the Fleet 'for evyll relygion, with a letter to the wardeyn to kepe him in close prysone'.[83] According to Foxe, he had sent to a thief in prison

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81. M. Coverdale, Certain most godly, fruitful and comfortable letters of such true saintes and holy Martyrs of God . . ., (1564), 354 - 357.

82. LB, 811.

83. APC, V, 1554 - 1556, 94.

waiting to be hanged 'a certain English book of Scripture for his spiritual comfort'.[84] The majority of the Protestants in Coventry belonged to the artisan classes, though probably drawn from the more wealthy of this social group. It is of especial significance, therefore, that one who was a member of the magisterial elite should have been arrested for his Protestant beliefs.

The importance of this was not lost on John Bradford, who wrote another letter to Hopkins while he was a prisoner in the Fleet.[85] He said, 'It had not beene so greatte a thing for Maister Hopkins to have suffered as Maister Hopkins, as it is for M. Hopkins also to suffer as Maistre Shereff. Oh happie day yt you were made Sherefe, by the which as God in this world woulde promote you to a more honourable degree, so by suffering in this roume he hath exalted you in heaven & in the sighte of his church & children, to a much more excellent glory, when was it redde, that a shrefe of a citie hath suffered for ye Lords sake: Where reade we of any shrefe that hathe bene cast in prison for concience to godwardes'. Bradford appreciated that Hopkins' civic position as a sheriff would have considerable impact. He went on, 'now do you preach more, not onelye to all men but speciallye to Magistrates in this realme who would ever have thought that you should have bene ye first Magistrate yt for Christes sake should have lost any thing'. The magistracy of Coventry had declared for Mary as the lawful queen, but if any of them were Protestants, they took care not to publicise the fact.

Bradford was right in thinking that Hopkins' arrest was a notable

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84. Foxe, op. cit., VII, 249-50.

85. Coverdale, op. cit., 345 - 354.

contribution to the advancement of Protestantism, because those in prominent social positions were more likely to be taken notice of than those of the humbler sort. They provided the focal points, and leadership around which the movement could form and develop. Most of the prominent figures who had embraced the new faith fled abroad with the accession of Mary, however, thus depriving the movement of this much-needed leadership. Hopkins himself fled abroad with his wife and eight children before the end of 1555. His release from prison was effected, according to the City Annals, 'by suit and great friendship', while Strype notes that it was accomplished 'after great intercession'.[86] He settled in Basle, while one of his sons, Thomas, settled at Aarau, since he is cited in the lists as a 'resident'.[87]

Shortly after Hopkins' arrest, the first burning took place in Coventry of a Protestant martyr. On 8 February 1555, Laurence Saunders a London clergyman was burnt in the Little Park to the south of the city for his heretical opinions.[88] It is not clear why Saunders was brought to Coventry. He was not, it seems, a native of the city, although there was a magisterial family of that name to which he may have been related. The only definite connection he had with the city was that his brother, Edward Saunders was recorder of Coventry between 1541 and 1553.[89] His burning at Coventry might

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86. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 229; J. Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials Relating Chiefly to Religious and the Reformationof it, and the Emergencies of the Church of England, under King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Mary, (1721), III, i, 227.

87. C. H. Garrett, The Marian Exiles, (1938, CUP repr., 1961), 356.

88. Foxe, op. cit., VI, 628; City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 229.

89. LB, 764, 806.

have been intended as an example to other Protestants in the Midlands of what to expect if they persisted in their beliefs.

Saunders' presence in Coventry provides further information about the social background of Protestants in the city. According to Foxe, after his arrival a shoemaker was sent to Saunders to provide him with a pair of shoes. The shoemaker was at least a Protestant sympathiser for he greeted Saunders thus: 'O my good master! God strenthen and comfort you', to which Saunders replied, 'Gra-mercies good shoemaker, and I pray thee to pray for me'.[90] This exchange serves to underline the fact that the bulk of the evidence that we have of Protestants in Coventry suggests that they were drawn largely from members of the artisan classes of skilled workers.

Saunders knew some of the Coventry Protestants. He was acquainted with both John and Robert Glover, brothers to the William Glover who was involved in Suffolk's rebellion the previous year. Robert was subsequently burnt for his Protestant beliefs in the Little Park some seven months hence. The acquaintance was of some standing, since there is extant a letter from Saunders to John and Robert Glover, dated 28 October 1554. It was written while the former was in prison in London, but is of little note, other than to establish the association. Saunders also wrote to the two brothers the same morning he was burnt, which, again, is of little note, but reinforces the association between them.[91]

The Glovers, John and his wife Agnes, Robert and his wife Mary,

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90. Foxe, loc. cit.

91. Coverdale, op. cit., 205 - 207, 207 - 228.

who was a neice of Hugh Latimer, and William, who was apparently not married, came from near Atherstone in north Warwickshire, close to the Leicestershire border. Dugdale stated that John Glover, the eldest, came from Baxterley, which is a few miles to the west of Atherstone, where, during Edward VI's reign, he built Baxterley Hall, and describes him as 'then a Retainer to the Lord Ferrers but formerly a Servant to the Abbots of Merevale'.[92] He goes on to say that Latimer was a frequent visitor to Baxterley. He preached there also, for there is extant a sermon delivered by him at Baxterley on Christmas Day 1552.[93] Robert appears to have lived at Mancetter, which is just to the south of Atherstone. The City Annals, when referring to his burning, describe him as a gentleman of Mancetter, and he was also well educated, holding a master's degree from Cambridge.[94] The wealth and social position of this Warwickshire family is undeniable. Little further is known about the third brother, William, however.

The Glovers were very active Protestants within this part of Warwickshire. Robert was known to John Philpot, who wrote to him on 11 November 1554 from the King's Bench prison in London, although, as he stated, he did so 'at the mocion of this bearer; albeit I have no bodily acquaintance with you'. Even so, Philpot's letter indicates that he had achieved some notoriety, for it stated that 'we here in prison .... do hear of your diligence .... which cease not to do the office of an evangelist, although it be with danger of affliction'.[95]

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92. W. Dugdale, The Antiquities of Warwickshire, (1656), 1054.

93. G. Elewes (ed.), Sermons and Remains of Hugh Latimer Sometime Bishop of Worcester Martyr 1555, (Parker Society, 20, 1845), 84 -5.

94. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 229; J. A. Venn (ed.), Alumni Cantabrigiensis, 4 vols. (1922-27).

95. Coverdale, op. cit., 241-42.

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94. City Annals, Bliss Burbidge, op. cit., 229; J. A. Venn (ed.), Alumni Cantabrigiensis, 4 vols. (1922-27).

95. Coverdale, op. cit., 241-42.

If Robert was active, then so was his brother John, as Foxe relates. He stated that Joyce Lewes of Mancetter, 'a gentlewoman born' was so affected by the burning of Laurence Saunders at Coventry, which she appears to have attended, that she sought out John Glover, who subsequently converted her. Her husband Thomas, however, remained Catholic, and Foxe tells of how she was 'compelled by the furiousness of her husband to come to church'. She was eventually arrested, but being of gentle birth was given one month in which to recant, her husband having to enter into a bond of £100 to present her at the end of that time before the bishop. John Glover and others sought to persuade her husband not to do this, but to forfeit the money rather than consign his own wife to the fire. This he would not do, but presented her at the stated time, after which she spent a year in prison before being burned at Lichfield. Foxe also mentions that at her burning a priest was present to note those who he saw drinking from the same cup as Joyce Lewes before her execution, and he gives the names of several women who did so, which included Agnes Glover, all of whom were subsequently examined and pronounced heretics. All eventually abjured and submitted to penance.[96]

The Coventry Protestants were closely involved with the Glovers and others of their belief in the area of Baxterley, Mancetter and Atherstone, therefore, which seems almost to have been a more active centre for Protestantism than the city. The strong links between the Glovers and Latimer and the latters frequent visits to Baxterley probably do much to create this impression. A leading Protestant divine was bound to be the centre of any group. The impression is reinforced by the fact that Augustine Bernher servant to Latimer was

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96. Foxe, op. cit., VII, 836-37.

the brother-in-law of John Careless, (already mentioned) having married his sister Elizabeth.[97] Much of the evidence, therefore, suggests that it was in these three places that Protestantism was most active in the Midlands.

All three Glovers were evidently Protestants, but only one, Robert was martyred. He was burnt on 20 September 1555 along with another, one Cornelius Bungay of Coventry, a capper, about whom very little is known.[98] Glover's death brought letters of comfort to his wife and children from friends, and also from those who had heard of him. Nicholas Ridley wrote to Mary Glover while her husband was as yet in prison, although, as Philpot before him, he did not know him personally. He said to his wife that there were three reasons for writing to her upon hearing of her husband's imprisonment: for God's word's sake, because she was a woman 'hearty' in God's cause and because 'old father Latimer is your uncle or near cousin'.[99] Ridley had been informed of Glover's arrest, in much the same way no doubt as Philpot had heard of his evangelising work: through a network of communication operated by the Protestants in England. The letter's content was like that of most of the martyr's letters, and was full of exhortations to remain constant in Christ. Ridley also stated that he had written, apparently at some length, to her husband; but the letter has not survived.

Mary Glover also received a letter from John Careless in King's Bench prison in London. Again, there are exhortations to remain

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97. This is clear from the following letters: Coverdale, op. cit., 607 - 611, Foxe, op. cit., vii, 196 - 97, 198 - 99.

98. Foxe, op. cit., VII, 8I4, 8I9.

99. Coverdale, op. cit., 74 - 5.

steadfast in her faith, and Careless quotes to her 'as your good Uncle sayde to me once, and your deare husband full often'. He tells her to place all her trust in Christ, even to the point of suffering death herself, 'for the testimonye of his truth ..... whiche is the greatest promotion and dignitie that God can bring us unto in this life'. He asks her to commend him to her children, Hugh, Marmaduke and their younger brother and sister, and to his 'good brother' Augustine and his wife, his sister, and thanks her for her consideration towards them.[100] Careless's letter also establishes his association with the Glovers and Latimer.

John Careless was one of the most prominent of the Coventry Protestants. He was subsequently re-arrested after his release with Clerk, Astleyn and Wylcockes, apparently in mid-1554. About this time a group of 'players' were arrested in the city for 'sedition'. This is learned from two letters written by Sir Henry Bedingfield, the princess Elizabeth's gaoler while she was in safe keeping at Woodstock, Oxfordshire. The first, dated 30 July 1554, and addressed to the Privy Council, states 'Theare hathe com to my knowledge synce my last wrighting unto your lordships in several matters tending to notable sedicion: The holle circumstances whereof appering by divers letters my sayd brother hathe to deliver unto your lordships. In which cases, or the lyke herafter to insue, I shall beseche you to put order for the ponyshement of the offenders. Sir William Reynsford hathe taken great payne in Ryding to Coventry for the taking of one of the offenders'. In a second letter, dated 16 August, Bedingfield stated 'At my laste sendyng to your lordshippes by my brother Anthone, I advertised you off certayn players, and off oon heywoode, which wrote a sedicious letter

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100. ibid., 624 - 5.

at Coventre, and there remayne in prison. Yff yt myght plese your lordshipp to determyn your order to the comissioners and other officers towching the same, yt sholde be moche comforte to them in ther service, and terror to the lyke offendours'. The nature of the letter is nowhere referred to, while 'heywood' is unidentifiable. But it is perhaps possible to identify one of the other players as John Careless.[101]

Foxe relates that while in prison in the city 'he was there in such credit with his keeper, that upon his word he was let out to play in the pageant about the city with his companions. And that done, keeping touch with his keeper, he returned again into prison at the hour appointed'.[102] Careless was a player, therefore, in the Corpus Christi Day pageants, and was let out 'with his companions', who were presumably all players as well. Here we may have a reference to the players referred to by Bedingfield who were arrested in mid-1554. The likelihood of this is increased by what can be deduced about Careless' subsequent movements. He spent some time in gaol in Coventry before being moved to the King's Bench in London, where he was to die on 1 July 1556. During his time in prison there he was interrogated as to his religious beliefs, the examination being carried out on 25 April 1556, when he stated that he had been in prison for about two years.[103] This places his arrest in mid-1554, at just the time that Bedingfield was writing to the Privy Council about a group of players and a seditious letter written by one of their number.

John Careless' notoriety was due to his prolific letter-writing during his long imprisonment, when he became a major figure in what

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101. R.W. Ingram, Records of Early English Drama: Coventry. (MUP, 1981), 592.

102. ibid., 207-8.

103. Foxe, op. cit., VIII, 162-70.

was a large circle of correspondents, many of whom were also in one of the several London prisons for their Protestant beliefs. Many - indeed, most of them - were subsequently martyred for their beliefs.[104] He wrote and received letters in return to a number of the leading Protestant divines, such as John Bradford, John Philpot and Hugh Latimer, and his brother-in-law Augustine Bernher. The exchange of letters between Careless and Bradford was apparently particularly large. After Bradford's death Careless wrote to 'a faithful friend', who had comforted him, that 'I have vii most godly and comfortable letters of that blessed of the lord good master Bradforde, which he wrote only for my comfort'. In a letter to Bradford before his death Careless admitted to him that he owed him three letters.[105] Careless wrote to many of the lesser figures in the Marian persecutions, most of whom he probably became acquainted with during his time in prison. There are quite a few letters to various of the Essex martyrs, such as Thomas Whittle, Agnes Glascock, Henry Adlington, William Tyms, Robert Drakes, Thomas Spurge, John Cavel, and George Ambrose, as well as to some of the London martyrs, such as Bartlet Green and Joan Warne. There are also letters to other individuals whose names are known, but not their origins, as well as some letters to people whom Careless identified only by their initials, or referred to only as 'a faithful friend'. Of course, he also wrote to those Protestants, martyrs or otherwise, whom he knew in Coventry and the Midlands.

Most of Careless' letters take the form of pious exhortations to the recipient to remain steadfast in their Protestant faith. They

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104. Many of Careless' letters were printed by Coverdale, op.cit., while others were printed in Foxe, op.cit., and the volumes of writings of the Protestant divines published by the Parker Society.

105. Coverdale, op.cit., 631 - 32, Foxe, op.cit., VIII, 176.

seem usually to have been written when the recipient was awaiting death. There are others of a different sort, however, such as those to individuals who were suffering a crisis of conscience, and even to those who had lapsed from their faith into the practices of the Catholic Church, usually by attending mass.[106] The letters also show that Careless himself was not immune to such things himself. He wrote to others for their help and support. The correspondence was a two-way thing. In all, twenty eight letters written by Careless survive.

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So far we have been concerned with Protestantism in Coventry, but mention should be made of Julinus Palmer, who was a native of the city and who was burned for his beliefs at Newbury on 16 July 1556, a month after Careless had died in the King's Bench. Palmer was the son of Roger Palmer, who had been mayor in 1534. He attended Oxford University, where he obtained a Master of Arts degree. His father's will of 1544 contains bequests to him for his exhibition at Oxford, of £20 'for his exhibicon at Scole'. Foxe states that he was a papist throughout Edward VI's reign, being converted to Protestantism during Mary's. He relates that during the former's reign, between 1549 and 1553, he was fellow of Magdalen College, but was put out because of his Catholic beliefs. He was restored after the accession of Mary. Subsequently, he gave up his fellowship of his own volition, and became Master of Reading Grammar School, by this time having been converted to Protestantism. Ejected from Oxford for his Catholic beliefs, he was put out of Reading for his Protestant ones; he then came to Coventry to his mother, according to Foxe, 'hoping to obtain at her hands certain legacies due to him by his father's late will', but she would

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106. See Careless' letter to Agnes Glascock of Hockley, Essex, Foxe, op.cit., VIII, 195-96.

have nothing to do with him, because of his new-found beliefs. He made his way back to Reading via Oxford, where he was betrayed to the authorities by one Hampton, and subsequently burnt.[107]

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The beliefs of the Coventry Protestants, and for present purposes we will include the Glovers, are found in their interrogations or reports of them in their letters to each other. They are remarkably uniform and in accord with the leading Protestant divines, some of whom, as has been noted, were known to many of them. One of the things they were constantly asked in their interrogations was, 'where was your church before Edward VI's time?'. Glover was asked this at his preliminary examination at Coventry conducted by Ralph Baines, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield and again at his second examination at Lichfield. His answer on the first occasion was to ask Baines where his church had been before Elijah's time, and what outward show there was of it in Christ's time. The second time Glover would not be drawn into an argument and stated simply that he professed himself to be a member of that church.[108] Bungay's views on the matter were never solicited or, if they were, have not survived. As for Careless, there is clear evidence that he agreed wholeheartedly with Glover. When he was interrogated himself he stated that he was 'of the true catholic church of Christ', and when asked to be more explicit, he said, 'it was here in England in the days of good king Edward'.[109]

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107. J. Foster, Alumni Oxoniensis The Members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714. 4 vols. (1891-2); LJRO, Palmer, Roger, 12/2/44; Foxe, op. cit., VIII, 769-774.

108. The details of Glover's arrest, imprisonment and examinations are contained in a letter to his wife Mary, Coverdale, op. cit., 527 - 42.

109. Careless' set down an account of his examination, which is given by Foxe, VIII, 162 - 70.

He asserted this belief again in a letter to Henry Adlington when instructing him on how to answer at his own interrogation. He told him then to say he was 'of the catholic church of Jesus Christ, which was well known to be here in England in our late king Edward's days' when asked what church he belonged to.[110]

Interestingly, the Coventry Protestants did not claim Lollards as antecedents. No Coventry Protestant claimed to be a descendant of Lollards - that is either of Coventry Lollards or Lollards elsewhere. No Coventry Protestant is known to have been a Lollard or come from a family with Lollard connections. The Coventry Protestants had no sense that the city's Protestantism owed anything to that late-medieval heresy. In their minds their church had remained largely invisible since Christ's time until it had been freed from Roman subjugation in Edward VI's reign.

The Coventry Protestants asserted Scriptural authority for their church. Glover stated at his first examination that 'Christ was content that the people should judge his doctrine by searching the scriptures, and so was St. Paul; methinks you should claim no further privilege no pre-eminence than they had' in response to a question by Baines as to who should judge the word of God. He asserted the same point at his second examination, when he professed his membership of a church 'that is builded upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the cornerstone', which Church, he went on to say, 'hath been from the beginning, though it bear no glorious show before the world, being ever, for the most part, under the cross and affliction, contemned, despised, and persecuted'. Careless told

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110. Coverdale, op. cit., 611 - 16.

Adlington in his letter to stress that he had been taught in Edward's reign by 'godly preachers and prophets sent of God', and that 'pure preaching of his holy word' was one of two 'special tokens' by which his church was well known during this reign. The other was 'the due administration of his holy sacraments'.

Naturally, the interrogations of the Coventry Protestants concentrated on their views regarding the sacraments. Glover, Bungay and Careless all asserted that there were only two, those of Baptism and the Last Supper. In his letter to Henry Adlington, Careless told him that if he was asked to define a sacrament he would say it was, 'a visible sign of an invisible grace, and hath the promise of God's mercy annexed unto it, available to all such as do worthily receive it, and not unworthily worship it, as they would have us do, contrary to God's commandment. And these properties, belonging to Christ's true sacraments, cannot be applied unto any of those five sacraments which thay have invented of their own'. Of these the sacrament of the altar, or the Last Supper, attracted more attention. When Glover was asked what he thought of the presence of Christ in it, he answered that the Catholic mass was neither sacrifice nor sacrament. From what Careless said to Adlington, it may be assumed that he agreed with Glover. On a number of occasions in his correspondence Careless spoke out against the Mass, but one particular letter is of note, addressed to 'all the faythful flocke of Iesus Christ within ye city of London'. It was designed as an open letter, it seems, and in it he dwells at some length on the 'Antichristian and idolatrous service' of the Catholic Church. The main thrust of his letter was aimed at those of the true faith who attended mass, 'that they maye cloke their knowledge and dissemble their faythe, & seeke what shiftes they can;

to save their life, landes & goodes, so that they do not utterly deny the truth in their hartes or by espresse wordes, in the way of recanting'.[111] Bungay was the most forthcoming. He stated that 'in the sacrament of the popish altar, there was not the real body and blood of Christ, but the substance of bread and wine there remaining still, because St. Paul calleth it bread and wine'. He was also more explicit with regard to Baptism, saying that sins were not washed away by baptism, because 'the washing of the flesh purges the flesh outwardly, and not the soul'.[112]

Glover was asked if he considered that there were any sacraments besides Baptism and the Last Supper. He answered, 'to all those that declare a true and unfeigned repentance, a sure hope, trust, and confidence in the death of Christ, to such, I grant, ministers have authority to pronounce, by the power of God's word, the remission of sins'. This was essentially the same thing as the Catholic Church said. Glover was pressed that this was a sacrament, but he would not admit it as such, and there he parted from the Catholic Church. He was then asked if he allowed confession, but would only say that he did not. Bungay would have disagreed with Glover here. He asserted that 'the priest hath no power on earth to absolve any sinner from his sins'.

Nothing more is known about the beliefs held by the Coventry martyrs, but there is every reason to believe that they were of the mainstream Protestant movement. Most of Glover's preliminary examination took the form of trying to convince him of the necessity

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111. ibid., 585 - 602

112. Bungay's examination is given by Foxe, op. cit., VII, 819-20

of submitting to the authority of his bishop, Ralph Baines, in the matter of interpreting the Scriptures, and he was accused of being arrogant because he would not give way. To this he replied, 'If you will be believed because you are a bishop, why find fault with the people that believed Latimer, Ridley, Hooper, and the residue of them that were bishops?'. By implication, and by his association with Latimer himself, Glover followed their teachings. So far as Careless was concerned, however, the evidence for his mainstream Protestantism is more clear-cut, and is reflected in his contact with some of the more extreme Protestant elements while in prison.

In the King's Bench prison Careless found himself in contention with the 'Freewillers', in particular John Trew. Some of his letters reflect the contention between Trew and himself, which was mainly over the question of predestination. In a letter to William Tyms, who was in Newgate prison, Careless touches upon his disagreement with Trew, (although he is not named) which was very intense at its peak. He reminded Tyms that Satan seeks 'to provoke you to put some part of your trust and confidence in yourself, and in your own holiness and righteousness, that you might that way rob God of his glory, and Christ of the honour and dignity of his death'. He tells Tyms that 'our free-will Pharisees' are greatly offended by such speaking, 'for it felleth a man's righteousness to the ground ..... and extolleth only the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is allowed before God, and is freely given to all those that firmly believe'.[113] Careless was extolling the Calvinist doctrine of the total corruption of man, and his inability to do good without the help of God.

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113. Coverdale, op. cit., 568 - 701.

The dispute with Trew drew letters of comfort and support from Careless friend's, John Philpot and John Bradford. The former wrote to him sorry to hear of the 'great trouble' to which the 'schismatics' and 'self will blynded scatterers' were putting him, and reminded him that 'they resist not you, they resiste Christ, and bee workers agaynst their own salvation'. He exhorts Careless to 'shew as much modestye and humilitie as you may possible, do shall your labour please God beste, and your adversaryes receive the more shame, and others seeing your modest conversation amongst these contemptables, shal glorify god in hys truth by you, & the more abhore them'. Bradford, who unceasingly sought to win over the 'Freewillers' to his beliefs, added at the end of one of his letters to Careless, 'Forget not salutations in Christ, as you shall think good, to Trew and his fellows. The Lord hath his time, I hope, for them also, although perchance we think otherwise'.[114]

The central issue between Careless and Trew, however, was the matter of predestination, and this came to the fore when Careless was examined about divisions among the Protestants in the King's Bench. The Catholic writers and propagandists were quick to seize upon the apparently heterogeneous beliefs of the Protestants in order to prove that their church was the only one able to maintain a uniform doctrine. Careless' examiner, Dr. Martin, took delight in the division between him and Trew. He tells him that he has heard that there is 'great contention' between them over predestination. Trew had been examined shortly before Careless, which is probably where this became evident. Martin asked Careless if he believed in predestination, for Trew had told him that he 'dost affirm that God hath predestined

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114. ibid., 245 - 46, 373 - 74.

some to salvation that cannot be damned, live they never so wickedly, and some to damnation that cannot be saved, live they never so godly, well, and virtuously'. Careless denied this, accusing Trew of misquoting him, and said, 'I am sure that such as God hath elected he doth guide and govern by his grace and Holy Spirit, in such sort, that they do love his laws, and always seek to do his will'. He agreed that none that were elected would be damned, and was accused of saying that all shall be saved by election and none damned. To this Careless said, 'I say with St. Paul, I have nothing to do with them that are without. I will leave them to God, whose judgments are just. My whole desire is to feel the depth of God's mercy towards his elect; of which blessed number my sure belief is, that I am one'. Careless' examination passed on to other things at this point, but returned to the question of predestination again later, when he was asked to state his belief again in order that it might be set down on paper. He said that he believed that God, through Jesus Christ, 'did elect and appoint in him before the foundation of the earth was laid, a church or congregation, which he doth continually guide and govern by his grace and Holy Spirit, so that none of them shall ever finally perish'. He was then asked what Trew's beliefs were in this matter, with a view, it seems, to set them down next to his own, thereby establishing the difference, which might later be exploited. Careless said that he thought he believed as the rest of the clergy believed of predestination, 'that we be elected in respect of our good works, and so long as we do them, and no longer', but when Martin was going to have it written down that Trew believed of predestination as the papists believed, Careless objected, and insisted that he did not say this and that his actual words should be set down, not the interpretation of them. He

subsequently refused to answer any more questions on the subject.

Careless' examination was prompted by certain articles he had sent to twelve individuals in Newgate who were shortly to be burned. A copy of the articles had been taken by Henry Hart, a confederate of Trew's, who had set down on the reverse side a set of articles of his own, which reflected the views of the 'Freewillers'. Martin sought to exploit the lists, which he had in his possession. He asked Careless to tell him what church he was of : 'I hear say that you have divers churches and faiths in the King's Bench; and here I have two of your faiths which you sent to Newgate; Look upon them; and pray thee tell me which is thy faith, for the one of them is thine, and thine own handwriting'. He demanded of Careless if he recognised the handwriting of the other writer. Careless did, but did not admit it. In his subsequent account of his examination he stated, 'But yet I lied falsely; for I knew him indeed, and his qualities too well' and went on to say, 'many a simple soul hath he shamefully seduced, beguiled, and deceived with his foul Pelagian opinion, both in the days of that good king Edward and since his departure'. Martin asked Careless if he knew any others of Trew's group, but he denied this as well. Again, he did know them - if not personally, then by name. He sought to dissociate himself from Trew and Hart and their followers. He said that he was of the true church, and condemned 'the Arians, Anabaptists, or any other kind of heretics' outright: 'I abhor all heretics, sectaries, and schismatics, from the bottom of my heart. I am of the true catholic church of Christ'. And, he related that Martin was happy as he put it himself, 'to see how you are one against the other, and both against the catholic church'.

Next, Martin challenged Careless about two prisoners in the King's Bench who denied the divinity of Christ. Careless had been careful to keep as much of the disagreement between Protestant and Protestant from Martin, but here he admits it. However, he said he did not know, if those two still held to their opinion, since he had not seen them for about a quarter year', because he had been kept 'a close prisoner from them and all the rest'. He stated that he abhorred such an opinion, and that this was clear from the first two articles which he had written and which Martin had in his hands. Martin asked how he would prove his case if he were put to the test, and suggested that he would not prove it by Scripture, but by general councils. This was another ploy to trap Careless, who answered that he was sure that Scripture did prove his view, and that if all the world's general councils determined it, he would not therefore believe it; whereupon the matter ended.

From Careless' examination it is also clear that he and the others worshipped according to the Prayer Book of 1552. Martin quoted to Careless the second of his articles which stated this; which book he said, 'was in all points agreeable to God's word'. He could not help pointing out that there had been a previous Prayer Book before this one, but passed on quickly to the problems at Frankfurt, where, he reminded Careless, 'Thy second book is also in divers points condemned of heresy'. He asked him to explain why this should be, to which Careless replied, 'I am sure that it is not there in any point condemned of heresy, unless it be of the Anabaptists, as it is here', who he did not doubt were on the Continent as they were in England. Martin pressed him further, however, by pointing out that 'Master Cox and others that were preachers in king Edward's time, had 'disproved'

the second book on a number of points, and made 'a third book'. This is clearly a reference to the dispute between Dr. Richard Cox and John Knox in mid to late 1555 as to the form of worship adopted in Frankfurt. Careless replied that he was sure 'that neither master Cox, nor any other of our Godly preachers that be fled unto Frankfurt, have condemned that book in any point as repugnant to the word of God, though perchance they have altered something therin, according to the usage of that country where they now are', to which he added, 'And I have not denied in my article but the church of Christ hath authority to enlarge or diminish anything in the same good book, so far forth as is agreeable to the Scriptures'. Martin sought to get Careless to admit that it was an article of his faith that all men should believe the Second Prayer Book upon pain of damnation, but Careless challenged him to show where he had said this, whereupon Martin moved on to other things.

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The letters of the Coventry martyrs are useful in identifying the religious beliefs of various individuals, in particular members of the ruling elite. The most illuminating of the letters was that written by Robert Glover to his wife giving an account of his arrest, imprisonment and interrogations. He told his wife that soon after his arrest and imprisonment in Coventry he was visited by three individuals, William Brasbridge, Charles Phineas and Nicholas Hopkins. They sought to persuade him to be released under a bond, but Glover would not do this, because he asserted that to do so would be tantamount to admitting his guilt. The three men seem to have offered to pay the bond themselves, for Glover tells his wife that they 'undertook also to make the bond easy'. Later, a certain 'Master Dudley'

visited him, and like those before him sought to persuade him to be released 'upon bonds', but he again refused. The identities of these men remain largely unknown, although since Glover uses the term 'master' in reference to Dudley, a term which he uses again later with reference to a magistrate of the city, it may be assumed that he was referring this time also to one of that class. Nothing is known about the first two individuals named by Glover. Nicholas Hopkins was almost certainly related to Richard Hopkins, though the exact relationship is not known. He sat on the city council on one occasion in 1554. 'Master Dudley' is probably Thomas Dudley, who was elected sheriff in 1553, when he was described as 'generous'. He was bailiff the following year, and he sat on the city council on one occasion in 1555.[115]

Glover's preliminary examination by Bishop Baines at Coventry involved some of the aldermen of the city who were Catholics. Christopher Waren fetched Glover from the gaol, at which time the latter challenged him regarding his arrest: 'I laid to Master Warren's charge the cruel seeking of my death; and when he would have excused himself, I told him he could not wipe his hands so; he was guilty of my blood before God, as though he had murdered me with his own hands'. He said Waren parted from him, saying that he needed not fear if he would be of his belief, while he was conveyed to the house of a certain Denton, where there was present a 'Master Rogers'. Waren's religious beliefs are not in doubt. The duke of Suffolk was kept under arrest in his house after the failure of his rebellion the previous year. Waren, a draper, was a long-standing member of the city council: warden in 1533, sheriff in 1538 and mayor in 1542, he was thereafter

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115. LB, 809, 806, 809, 812.

a regular member of the city council and remained so throughout Edward VI's reign and Mary's.[116] 'Master Rogers' was undoubtedly Jasper Rogers, a vintner, and another long-standing member of the city council. Rogers was warden in 1534, sheriff in 1540 and mayor in the first year of Edward VI's reign. He sat regularly on the city council during Edward's and Mary's reigns.[117] Beyond the possibility that 'Denton' was one Richard Denton, who appears as witness and in some cases supervisor to several wills in the late 1540s and 1550s, nothing is known about him.[118]

To the information supplied by Glover's letters can be added that of Foxe's account of his arrest, the circumstances of which were unusual.[119] Foxe states that the Bishop Baines sent letters to the mayor of Coventry for the apprehension of John Glover but not his brother Robert. The mayor was apparently a Protestant sympathiser, because he sent word to John Glover that he was going to be arrested. This was Thomas Ryley, a draper, warden in 1532, sheriff in 1546 and then mayor in 1555. He sat only intermittently on the city council in Edward's and Mary's reigns.[120] Now, both Robert and William were with John at the time, but Robert was sick in bed and unable to move or be moved. The other two brothers made good their escape, but Robert was arrested even though his name was not on the warrant. He was brought before the sheriff, who, Foxe relates, 'would fain have

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116. ibid., 714, 727, 767, et. seq.

117. ibid., 718, 742, 781, et. seq.

118. LJRO, Gilbert, Morris, 27/4/47; Haughtyn, Robert, 7/7/50; Goodorstalk, Peter, 17/10/52. Somerfield, John, 17/10/52; Lee, William, 11/9/57.

119. Foxe, op. cit., VII, 815.

120. ibid., 714, 769, 773, 805, et. seq; LJRO, Joynour, William, 13/11/59.

have dismissed him, and did what he could, saying that he was not the man for whom they were sent'. Despite the unlawfulness of his arrest Glover was not released. He spent ten or eleven days in prison while his friends (above mentioned) strove for his release.

The unlawfulness of Glover's arrest apparently caused a division within the city council. Finding themselves in a predicament, the authorities sought to cover themselves, and so, as Glover was told by some friends, 'They would have laid all the matter upon the summoner: who being examined, denied it before their faces ..... saying that he had no commandment concerning me, but for my elder brother'. The dispute resulting from Glover's unlawful arrest might suggest that the Catholics held the upper hand on the city council: if the Protestants had been in the majority, he would surely have been released. Attempts on the part of his friends to have him enter into recognisances, no doubt in order for him to escape (for there can be little doubt that he would not have presented himself at a later date) are a further indication that this was so. After ten or eleven days in prison, however, the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield arrived in Coventry on his visitation of the diocese, and Glover underwent a preliminary examination. His answers proved unsatisfactory and he was returned to prison. On the following day, a Friday, he and the other prisoners were paraded through the streets packed with market-day people and sent to Lichfield for further interrogations.

Further evidence about the religious beliefs of members of the city council during Edward's and Mary's reign, confirm the impression that it was divided, and that the Catholics were in the majority. William Joynour, chamberlain in 1533, sheriff in 1543, and bailiff the following year was mayor in 1553, otherwise a regular member of

the city council throughout Edward's and Mary's reigns until his death in 1558. His will shows him to have been a Catholic. He bequeathed his soul to God, the blessed Virgin Mary and the Holy Company of Heaven, trusting to be saved through the merits of Christ's Passion. Despite this 'mixed' preamble, religious bequests in the body of his will reflect strong Catholic beliefs. He wished to be buried before the newly built Jesus altar in Holy Trinity, to which he gave 12d. He bequeathed 10s. to the Butchers and 2s. each to the Cappers, Weavers, Shearman and Tailors and Smiths to escort his body to church. He gave 12d. to the building of Our Lady's altar in Holy Trinity, and instructed his wife as executrix to give a further 5s.8d. to the altar if it was completed within a year of his death. He made extensive bequests to the poor: 20s. on the day of his death, 6s.8d. each yearly forever to Bond's and Ford's almshouses out of the rents of his lands and the remainder, after repairs had been made and a yearly obit kept in Holy Trinity after the death of his wife for both their souls, to the poor of the city who were 'in dekay other lame or impotent'. While his wife was alive she was to see a yearly obit kept for his soul out of certain lands set aside for this in his will.[121]

Similarly, William Westley's will is that of a devout Catholic. A capper, Westley was sheriff in 1547, and though he did not rise to higher civic office he was a regular member of the city council throughout Edward's and Mary's reigns. He bequeathed his soul to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Blessed Company of Heaven, wishing to be buried 'before ye quiere dore' next to his brother Henry Westley, a priest. The priests and clerks of both parish churches and the priests

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121. ibid., 714, 769, 773, 805, et. seq. LJRO, Joynour, William, 13/11/59.

of Bablake were to escort his body to church and be at his dirge and requiem mass. His body was also to be escorted to church by the crafts of Cappers, Smiths, Chandlers and Shearman and Tailors. He also requested a repeat of the services at his month's mind. Finally, a priest was to say mass daily for his soul, the soul of his wife and all his friends' souls.[122]

It is more difficult to identify individuals of Protestant beliefs from their wills, but there are two possibilities. Henry Lyngham, a baker, made his will in 1553, although it was not proved until 1557. Following a preamble in which he bequeathed his soul to God, trusting to be saved by the merits of Christ's Passion, Lyngham requested burial in the chancel of Holy Trinity 'above the Communyon Table', which might indicate Protestant leanings. He was a member of the city council in only two years, however, in 1547 and 1553.[123] Our other candidate is William Saunders, a capper, whose will contains a full Protestant preamble: 'I freelie gyve and bequethe my soule to almightie god my maker and Redemer the father the Sonne and the holie ghoste three persones and one god in trynytie beleving onlye by his moost precious deathe and blessed passyyon to be one of that nomber whiche shalbe saved And I Aske all the worlde forgivenes And I forgyve all the worlde'. Saunders went on to request burial in St. Michael's 'before the pulpytt there', which suggests Protestant beliefs. There are no bequests in the body of his will except to pay for his burial and for outstanding tithes. Saunders was sheriff in 1540, bailiff the following year and mayor in 1549. He was a regular member of

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122. LB, 783, et. seq.; LJRO, Westley, William, 28/11/58.

123. LB, 783, 806, LJRO, Lyngham, Henry, 27/7/57.

the council until his death in 1554.[124]

Though the city council was dominated by Catholic members, it was still of some concern to the Queen that a Catholic mayor should be elected. From 1555-56 the restoration of Catholicism moved on apace, and perhaps to assist this on 7 January 1556 the Privy Council wrote to the mayor, Thomas Ryley, and aldermen, just prior to the election of a new mayor, instructing them 'to cause sum Catholic and grave man to be chosen to their Maiour for this yere comyng'. The letter put forward the names of three 'Catholike and honest personnes', and they were told 'to give their voyces to one of them to be Maiour'. They were John Fitzherbert, a mercer, who was a member of the city council in 1547 and sheriff in 1552, Richard Whestler, about whom nothing is known, and 'oon Colman'. This latter individual was Robert Colman, who was eventually elected. He was a chamberlain in 1539, sheriff in 1549 and bailiff the following year before becoming mayor. He was a regular member of the city council during Edward's and Mary's reigns.[125]

Protestantism was not a majority religion by 1553, therefore. The numbers of Protestants in the city was undoubtedly growing, but they were still in the minority. The magisterial classes were composed of members of both religions, but were still made up of a majority of Catholics, and the control of the city council was still in their hands, as is clear from the case of Robert Glover. He would almost certainly have been released if the city had been controlled by the Protestants. There is insufficient evidence to establish the

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124. LB, 742, 759, 789, et. seq.; LJRO, Saunders, William, 19/4/54.

125. APC, V, 1554-1556, 218; LB, 783, 803, 737, 793, 794, et.seq.

proportions of Catholics and Protestants on the city council and hence to know if the former's majority was large or small. What is worthy of note, however, is that the council appears to have functioned perfectly well in Edward's reign despite religious division within it, and apparently continued to do so in Mary's reign. Whatever religious antagonisms there may have been within the city's governing class they were not sufficient to prevent good government.

CONCLUSION

Traditional medieval religious life was flourishing in Coventry in the late fifteenth century and early decades of the sixteenth (up to the 1530s). The inhabitants were pouring money and gifts into the religious institutions on a lavish scale both during their lifetimes and after their deaths. The greater part of the citizens' largesse was directed towards their two great and magnificent parish churches, to adorn, embellish and repair them, and to make them even more splendid. The religious orders were not forgotten, especially the two houses of friars in the city, and received many generous gifts and other considerations. There was also still an intense pre-occupation on the part of almost all the citizens with bequests which resulted in masses and prayers for their souls. The most wealthy inhabitants of Coventry provided for the health of their souls on an enormous scale, lavishing money - tens and occasionally even hundreds of pounds - on multiple provisions. The belief in Purgatory (as well as Heaven and Hell) and the need to expiate sins, which the above bequests were intended to do, was still powerful in Coventry at this time.

A good sign of the vitality of the pre-Reformation Chruch in Coventry was the amount of religious building in the late fifteenth century and first quarter of the sixteenth. Extensive repair work was being carried out on both parish churches but especially St. Michael's, and all the religious houses were engaged

in major building and repair programmes, financed in large part by the generous gifts of the inhabitants. The guilds also undertook work on their property. Corpus Christi Guild carried out extensive alterations to their guild hall of St. Nicholas and repairs to their church.

The year at Coventry was extremely full and elaborate. The citizens were involved constantly in observances, ceremonies and practices of a religious and secular nature. Besides the series of feasts and fasts marking the liturgical year many other occasions and days were celebrated in the city. There were numerous saints' days, especially those of saints to whom churches, chapels and altars in the city were dedicated. Because of the links between Coventry and the patron saint of England, St. George, his day was marked with a more than usually splendid procession. There were other more secular days, such as Hock Tuesday, May Day. On Midsummer's Day and St. Peter's Day the watch paraded through the city. And Coventry also set aside a day to remember Lady Godiva, who had been a major benefactor of the city. The contribution of the religious guilds and crafts to the ceremonial year was enormous. Corpus Christi Guild, of course, was responsible for the procession on Corpus Christi Day. The craft guilds, whose involvement in religious life has been largely overlooked, made an important contribution on several levels. They regulated church attendance on Sundays and the observance of the religious festivals throughout the year. Some maintained chapels and priests

and one of the Corpus Christi Day pageants. The Weavers were additionally responsible for the celebrations surrounding St. Osburg's Day, an important local saint.

The surviving religious guild and craft accounts show that no expense was spared in staging the religious and ceremonial year at Coventry, and new investment was being made all the time. We see this particularly in the provisions for Corpus Christi Day. The religious guild and craft accounts list countless payments for the repair and replacement of equipment and props for this day. Corpus Christi Guild was purchasing new vestments, streamers and a new canopy to carry over the sacrament in the early years of the sixteenth century, while there was at least one, possibly two, revisions of the Corpus Christi plays themselves.

Relations between the clergy and the inhabitants of Coventry were apparently cordial. There is little evidence of anti-clerical feeling in the city, perhaps owing to the fact that there were strong ties of family and friendship between them. The latter were promoted by social occasions, which served to bring clergy and lastly together on a less formal basis. Of course there were disputes between them and the citizens, as there were between citizens themselves, but that is to be expected given that they lived close together. There is, however, no evidence of deep-seated animosity or hostility to the clergy in the city. Every indication is that the citizens were content with them, which is underlined by the fact that they generally controlled them: the

majority of the clergy were appointed and (presumably) dismissed by them.

The inhabitants of Coventry were content with their Church, therefore, but the vigour of religious life in the city was not to last. Coventry's economy was in decline. This decline extended from the late fifteenth century into the 1550s, within which time there were two crisis periods. The first in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was short-lived and the city seemed to have recovered; but it did not from the second, which started about the late 1520s or early 1530s, when there was a sudden and dramatic decline. The previous constant stream of money and gifts to the Church was almost ceased. The citizens continued to make some donations, and the indications are they would have liked to have given more, but they could no longer afford to be as generous as previously. The once-vital institutions wasted away. Chantries decayed and were no longer maintained or combined with other decayed livings. The religious guilds were badly affected, in particular the junior Corpus Christi Guild, which was forced to amalgamate with Trinity Guild in order to survive in the mid-1530s. Trinity Guuld itself was constrained to curtail its own activities severely in the 1540s. The crafts found it difficult to maintain their religious functions, especially their priests and the Corpus Christi plays. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Coventry held on tenaciously to traditional observances. Every effort was made, even by individual citizens, to maintain the number of priests and thereby the level of masses said in the city,

and by the 'association' of crafts to maintain the Corpus Christi plays. The religious houses fared no better, the friaries worse than most, being in a poor and dilapidated condition by the time of their surrender. This meant that when the Church faced its greatest challenge it was in a weak position to make any response, let alone mount effective opposition to the religious changes.

The dissolutions had an enormous impact on religious life. All religious houses, hospitals, guilds and chantries were swept away, while secular institutions, especially the crafts which maintained chapels and priests, were badly mauled. The Shearmen and Tailors was probably hit the hardest of all, being licensed to hold lands in mortmain for the support of two priests. The loss of many of these institutions, and of the contributions of the others, struck at the heart of religious life in the city, the Church's doctrine and practises. Without these dissolutions the Reformation could not proceed, however, for the old order had to be removed to make way for the new. Despite the citizens' devotion to the old order, they apparently mounted little opposition to the dissolution of the monasteries. The city sought to obtain churches belonging to the dissolved institutions, however, the loss of which was a grave blow to the city which relied heavily on them. The city mounted a strong opposition in Parliament to the dissolution of the guilds, based partly upon the effects of the loss of their churches, which nearly wrecked the whole of the Edwardian Chantries Act. The city was eventually 'bought-off' with empty promises, as it turned out.

Because of the citizens' devotion to the old religion up to the time it was swept away, Protestantism found it difficult to gain a foothold. Lollardy, if it ever had been of any significance, was a virtually spent force by the early sixteenth century, and bequeathed no legacy of religious radicalism to the city. The early Protestants of Edward's reign never claimed any Lollard antecedents and the extent to which the new religion had been introduced to Coventry by 1553 was due entirely to the efforts of the Edwardian regime. It is difficult to estimate how far Coventry had been converted to Protestantism by the end of Edward's reign, but it was not yet a Protestant city. Though divided, the majority of citizens were probably still Catholic. Certainly, the latter were still in the majority on the city council.

There was not an immediate return to the old ways with Mary's accession, nor could there have been: the Henrician and Edwardian legislation underpinning the Reformation was still in force. What could be done was done, but it was not until the legislation had been repealed and the pre-1529 situation restored that the Marian Restoration could proceed unhindered. This had been accomplished by 1555, and the effect was immediate. All the sources show that the old practices and beliefs were still held by many of the citizens. This is not surprising, perhaps, since many were still alive in Mary's reign who had been brought up in the Catholic faith. The restoration now proceeded apace; the parish churches were restored

to much of their former style, the mass, the liturgical year and the many other observances and ceremonies and practises kept at Coventry were also brought back. There was much that could not be restored, however, such as the monasteries and the guilds. But what could be re-built, replaced or restored was, and in the last two or three years of Mary's reign Catholicism seems to have been in the ascendant. Protestantism had made ground, too, but slowly and sometimes grudgingly. The citizens reverted to the old ways with notable ease and in 1558 Coventry was still a city where the traditional orthodoxy seems to have held sway.

APPENDIX:

A breakdown of religious bequests in the surviving Coventry wills between 22 August 1485 and 17 November 1558.

Contents.

Abbreviations.

B	St. John the Baptist's at Babblake.
bbtc	Bring body to church.
CP	Cathedral priory.
CH	Charterhouse.
CCG	Corpus Christi Guild.
doe	Discretion of executors.
g	St. Gregory's Trental.
GF	Greyfriars.
H	Hospital of St. John the Baptist.
HT	Holy Trinity.
HTG	Holy Trinity Guild.
S	All secular priests.
St.G	St. George's Chapel.
St.J	St. James's Chapel.
St.M	St. Michael's.
WF	Whitefriars.

All religious houses, churches and chapels other than those in Coventry are referred to by name.

The crafts of Coventry are referred to by name.

Asterisks are used in a number of ways in the tables. In each case their use is explained in the relevant table.

Some methods of abbreviation are too lengthy to include here. In such cases they are explained at the foot of the relevant table.

TABLE 1
Probate jurisdiction of the wills: prerogative court of Canterbury or diocesan and archdeaconry courts of Coventry.

Year.	No. of wills.	Cant.	Cov.
1485	1	1	
86	1		1
87			
88	1	1	
89	4	4	
90	1	1	
91	2	2	
92	2	2	
93	4	4	
94	5	5	
95	4	4	
96	2	2	
97	1	1	
98	2	2	
99	1	1	
1500	2	2	
1	6	6	
2	1	1	
3	2	2	
4	2	2	
5	6	6	
6	3	3	
7	4	4	
8	1	1	
9	6	6	
10	10	9	1
11	7	7	
12	2	2	
13	3	3	
14	4	4	
15	2	2	
16	3	2	1
17	1	1	
18	7	7	
19	2	2	
20			
21	4	4	
22	1	1	
23	4	3	1
24	3	3	
25	3	3	
26	2	1	1
27	2	1	1
28	4	2	2
29	3	1	2
30	11	4	7
31	9	1	8
32	3	2	1
33	5		5
34	5		5
35	4		4
36	3		3
37	18		18
38	18	1	18
39	10	1	9
40	5	2	3
41	10		10
42	10		10
43	8	2	6
44	14		14
45	15	3	12

TABLE 1 continued.

Year.	No. of wills.	Cant.	Cov.
1546	11	2	9
47	3		3
48	6	1	5
49	11	1	10
50	13		13
51	20		20
52	10	2	8
53	13		13
54	7		7
55	2		2
56	9		9
57	31	2	29
58	30	1	29

TABLE 2
Bequests of testators souls.

	Traditional					Protestant			
Year.	GMS	GM & GM(S)	G(MS)	GS	G	G(CP)	G/S	Mixed	No preamble
1485	1								
86	1								
87									
88	1								
89	3				1				
90	1								
91	2								
92	2								
93	4								
94	5								
95	3				1				
96	1				1				
97	1								
98	2								
99	1								
1500	2								
1	6								
2	1								
3	2								
4	2								
5	6								
6	2							1	
7	3							1	
8	1								
9	5				1				
10	8			1	1				
11	3		2		2				
12			1		1				
13	3								
14	4								
15		1			1				
16	3								
17								1	
18	6							1	
19	2								
20									
21	4								
22					1				
23	1				3				
24					2				1
25	1	1						1	
26					2				
27					2				
28	2	1			1				
29	1	1			1				
30	6				3				2
31	2				1				6
32	2				1				
33					5				
34	1				4				
35					4				
36	2				1				
37	2				11				
38	15	1			3				
39	6				2	1		1	
40	4		1						
41	4		3					3	
42	5	4						1	
43	5		1		1			1	
44	10		2	1				1	
45	6		1		2	1		5	

TABLE 2 continued.

	Traditional				Protestant				
Year.	GMS	GM & GM(S)	G(MS)	GS	G	G(CP)	G/S	Mixed	No preamble
1546	8								
47	1				2				
48					3	3			
49		1	1	2	2	4		1	
50				1	6	5		1	
51	1				5	14			
52	1				2	7			
53					6	5		2	
54	3		2	1		1			
55	1							1	
56	2		3			1		3	
57	19		5	1	2	3		1	
58	9	1	11	1	2		1	6	

The categorization of the religious preambles follows the method used by D.M. Palliser in his book Tudor York, OUP, (1979), 250: GMS= bequest to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary and all Saints; GM= to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary; GM(S)= to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary asking all Saints to pray for testator; G(MS)= to God asking the Blessed Virgin Mary and all Saints to pray for testator; GS= to God and all Saints; G(Neutral)= simply to God; G(CP)= to God, trusting to be saved through the merits of Christ's Passion; G/S= to God, trusting to be saved. To these categories have been added those of 'Mixed', where the preamble contains traditional Catholic elements and also those more readily associated with the Protestant form, and 'No preamble', where, through damage, for example, the preamble cannot be identified.

TABLE 3

Numbers of testators from each parish.

Year.	St.M.	HT.	Unidentifiable.
1485	1		
86	1		
87			
88	1		
89	4		
90	1		
91	2		
92	2		
93	3	1	
94	4	1	
95	3	1	
96	2		
97		1	
98	2		
99	1		
1500	2		
1	4	2	
2	1		
3	2		
4		2	
5	4	2	
6	2	1	
7	3	1	
8	1		
9	3	2	1
10	7	3	
11	6	1	
12	2		
13	3		
14	4		
15	2		
16		3	
17	1		
18	5	2	
19	2		
20			
21	2	1	1
22	1		
23	4		
24	2	1	
25	1	1	1
26	1	1	
27	2		
28	2	1	1
29	2	1	
30	3	5	3
31	4	5	
32	1	1	1
33	4	1	
34	3	2	
35	3	1	
36	1	2	
37	11	7	
38	9	8	1
39	5	5	
40	2	3	
41	8	2	
42	8	3	
43	5	3	
44	11	3	
45	9	4	2
46	9	2	
47	2	1	

TABLE 3 continued.

Year.	St.M.	HT.	Unidentifiable.
1548	3	1	2
49	6	5	
50	4	8	1
51	14	3	3
52	5	2	3
53	7	6	
54	5	2	
55	1	1	
56	6	3	
57	19	9	3
58	15	15	

TABLE 4
Bequests to St. Michael's church.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485	1	26s.8d. for repairs.
86		
87		
88		
89	2	12d. for repairs. 12s.4d. for repairs and 6s.8d. for the repair of the high altar.
90		
91	1	12d. for repairs.
92	1	6s.8d. for repairs, 40s. for the repair of the 'Reredore' and 20s. for ornaments.
93		
94	1	8d. for repairs.
95	1	2s. for the repair of the high altar.
96	1	5s. for the building of the high altar.
97		
98	1	40s. towards the making of the high altar and two lights to burn before the image of St. Michael 'atte the quere door'.
99		
1500	2	20s. 'to the new work in the chansell'. 6s.8d. 'to the making of the Reredoys ther'.
1	1	12d. for the building of the high altar.
2		
3		
4		
5		
6	1	3s.4d. towards the building of the high altar.
7		
8	1	6s.8d. towards the gilding of the high altar.
9		
10	2	13s.4d. to the image of St. Michael 'beneth the queer dore' and 3s.4d. to maintain the light before the image. 5s. for repairs.
11	2	3s.4d. for repairs. 3s. 'to the cross staff at seynt Mighells'.
12		
13		
14	1	6s.8d. for repairs.
15		
16		
17	1	40s. for repairs and 'foure Copes of a Suyte of vestments' to the value of £40 or £50.
18	4	'A Suyte of vestments of black velwet' to the value of £50. 20s. for repairs, a banner cloth to the value of £4 and £10 'to the augmentation and betteryng of the Suyte of westments that my ffader gave to seint mychell Church'. 4d. 'to the sacrament lyght'. A close in Berkswell to 'find' St. Anthony Mass.
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25	2	'Oon fother of ledde' for repairs. 20d. for repairs.
26		
27		
28		
29	1	'A dyaper clothe to make An Alter Clothe to the use of the sayde hye Alter'.
30		
31		
32		

TABLE 4 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1533		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		
44		
45		
46	1	12d. for repairs.
47		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52	1	6d. for repairs.
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58	1	12d. for repairs.

TABLE 5
Bequests to the high altar of St. Michael's for tithes forgotten.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485	1	6s.8d.
86	1	40d.
87		
88		
89	3	20s. 3s.4d. 20d.
90	1	10s.
91	2	2s. 2s.
92	2	40s. 6s.8d.
93	1	40s.
94	3	12d. 6s.8d. 10s.
95	2	6s.8d. 2s.
96	1	2s.
97		
98	1	6s.8d.
99	1	40s.
1500	2	20s. 20d.
1	3	20s. 6s.8d. 20d.
2	1	6s.8d.
3	1	5s.
4		
5		
6	2	20s. 3s.4d.
7	2	40s. 10s.
8		
9	3	3s.4d. 12d. 10s.
10	4	10s. 12d. 3s.4d. 20d.
11	3	5s. 6s.8d. 20s.
12		
13	2	6s.8d. 3s.4d.
14	2	8s.8d. 3s.4d.
15	1	3s.4d.
16		
17	1	£6 13s.4d.
18	5	20s. 40s. 2s. 40s. 10s.
19	1	10s.
20		
21	2	3s.4d. 4d.
22		
23	1	6s.8d.
24	1	6s.8d.
25	1	40s.
26	1	20s.
27		
28	1	3s.4d.
29		
30	1	6s.8d.
31	1	3s.4d.
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39	2	20s. 20s.
40	2	13s.4d. 20s. and 'a gowne cloth'.
41	3	6d. 20s. 2s.
42	6	12d. 6d. 8d. 12d. 4d. 3s.4d.
43	4	12d. 2s. 12d. 12d.
44	6	2s. 8d. 12d. 12d. 12d. 20s.
45	3	20d. 10s. 6s.8d.
46	6	15d. 4d. 12d. 20s. 6s.8d. 8d.
47	1	8d.

TABLE 5 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49	1	2d.
50		
51	2	4d. 6d.
52		
53	2	3s.4d. 3s.4d.
54	1	4d.
55		
56	2	8d. 3s.4d.
57	7	4d. 11d. 2s. 3s.4d. 6d. 12d. 12d.
58	1	6d.

TABLE 6
Bequests to 'every chapel' or 'every altar' in St. Michael's.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98	1	3s.4d.*
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3	1	3s.4d.*
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11	1	6s.*
12		
13		
14	1	2s.*
15	1	4d.*
16		
17		
18		
19	1	6d.*
20		
21		
22		
23	1	20d.*
24	1	12d.*
25	1	'A torche of wax of 3lbs. weight'.*
26	1	2s. and a taper of wax of 1lb. in weight 'to be brennyde on the same Aulters in the tyme of devyne service'.
27		
28	1	12d.*
29		
30	1	4d.*
31	1	4d.*
32	1	doe.*
33	1	?*
34		
35		
36		
37		
38	2	6s.* 4d. 'to every auter in ye sayd church ye masse ys seyd'.
39	1	12d.
40	1	12d. 'to every Aulter in Saynte Mychealls where Masse is usuall sayde'.
41	1	4d.*
42		
43		
44	2	4d.* 12d. 'to every aulter in the saide churche where masse is saide to by some ornaments for the same'.

TABLE 6 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1545	1	12d. 'to every alter in the same churche where ther is any masse usually said every weeke and to none other'.
46		
47		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58	1	? to every altar 'where lyght ys accustomable keppte'.

An asterisk indicates that a testator made specific bequests to certain chapels or altars which are similarly marked in the following tables and the above sum to all the others.

TABLE 7
Bequests to the high altar of St. Michael's.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88	1	12d.
89	1	6s.8d.
90		
91		
92		
93	2	3s.4d. 12d.
94	1	12d.
95	1	2s.
96	1	3s.4d.
97		
98	1	4d.*
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3	1	3s.4d.*
4		
5	1	12d.
6		
7		
8	1	8d.
9		
10	3	20d. 12d. 20d.
11	3	12d. 16d. 6s.8d.*
12	2	10s.* 12s.
13	1	10s.
14	1	3s.4d.
15	1	4d.
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22	1	3s.4d.
23	3	6s.8d. 3s.4d. 2s.
24	2	3s.4d. 3s.4d.
25	1	3s.4d.
26	1	6d.
27		
28	1	6s.
29	1	12d.
30	2	6s.8d. 3s.4d.
31	2	12d. 12d.
32	2	3s.4d. 6s.8d.*
33	4	12d. 12d. 12d. 2s.*
34	3	4d. 8d. 12d.
35	3	4d. 8d. 12d.
36	1	3s.4d.
37	10	12d. 4d. 6d. 8d. 8d. 8d. 4d. 12d. ? 4d.
38	8	8d. 12d. 20d. 8d. 6s.8d.* 12d. 4d. 3s.4d.
39	1	6d.
40		
41	5	12d. 12d. 4d. ? 4d.
42	2	8d. 12d.
43	1	?
44	5	8d. 8d. 12d. 12d.* 12d.
45	4	12d. 8d. 6d. 40d.
46	2	12d. 6s.8d.
47	1	8d.

TABLE 7 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548	3	12d. 6d. 12d.
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55	1	12d.
56	1	12d.
57	9	12d. 8d. 8d. 4d. 4d. 12d. 6d. 12d. 'An aulter c loth'.
58	3	6s. 8d. 2s. 4d.

TABLE 8
Bequests to the Jesus altar in St. Michael's.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485	1	6s.8d.
86	1	2s.
87		
88	1	6d.
89	3	3s.4d. 20d. 12d.
90	1	3s.4d.
91	2	12d. 6d.
92	2	6s.8d. 12d.
93	3	10s. 3s.4d. 8d.
94	4	6d. 12d. 20d. 6s.8d.
95	3	3s.4d. 12d. 40d.
96	2	8d. 12d.
97		
98	1	2s.
99	1	20s.
1500	2	6s.8d. 12d.
1	2	12d. 40d.
2	1	20d.
3	2	3s.4d. 12d.
4		
5	3	20s. 12d. 20d.
6	1	12d.
7	3	10s. 12d. 10s.
8	1	4d.
9	3	16d. 12d. 40d.
10	5	2s. 12d. 12d. 12d. 12d.
11	5	20d. 12d. 2s. 12d. 6s.8d.
12		
13	1	2s.
14	2	12d. 30s.
15	2	4d. 12d.*
16		
17	1	6s.8d.
18	3	6s.8d. 12d. 6s.8d.
19	1	3s.4d.*
20		
21	1	12d.
22	1	12d.
23	2	12d. 12d.
24	1	12d.
25	1	10s. and a torch of wax 3 lbs. in weight.*
26	1	4d.
27		
28	1	12d.*
29	1	8d.
30		
31	4	4d.* 4d. 4d. 8d.
32		
33	4	4d. 4d. 4d. 12d.
34	3	2d. 4d. 4d.
35	3	4d. 4d. 4d.
36	1	6d.
37	9	2d. 3d. 8d. 3d. 4d. 2d. 4d. 4d. 4d.
38	6	6d. 4d. 12d. 8d. 4d. 4d.
39	3	4d. 4d. 3s.4d.
40		
41	5	4d. 6d. 4d. 2d. 8d.*
42	8	12d. 4d. 4d. 4d. 8d. 4d. 2d. 12d.
43	4	8d. 6d. 4d. 8d.
44	8	4d. 4d. 4d. 4d. 2d. 6d. 4d. 4d.
45	4	4d. 4d. 12d. 20d.
46	4	6d. 4d. 4d. 4d.
47	2	4d. 4d.

TABLE 8 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57	8	6d. 8d. 8d. 10d. 6d. 4d. 8d. 'An aulter clothe with a towell'.
58	5	3s.4d. 2s. 2d. 'A dyaper towell'. 12d.

TABLE 9

Bequests to the Drapers Chapel and to Our Lady's altar in St. Michael's.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99	1	20s.
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5	1	12d.
6		
7		
8		
9		
10	2	12d. 12d.
11	3	12d. 'A fyne clothe of diaper and A diaper towell and A fyne shete'. 20s.
12		
13	2	6s.8d. to maintain the light before the altar. 12d.
14	3	12d. 6s.8d. 2s.
15		
16		
17		
18	2	£5 for ornaments. 5s.
19		
20		
21		
22		
23	1	3s.4d.*
24		
25	1	6s.8d. and a torch of wax 3 lbs. in weight.*
26		
27		
28	1	12d.*
29		
30	1	3s.4d.*
31		
32		
33		
34	2	2d. 4d.
35		
36		
37	2	4d. 2d.
38	4	4d. 6d. 12d. 4d.
39	1	'A white vestment which I bought of ummffrey Reynolds'.
40		
41	1	8d.**
42	1	8d.
43	1	8d.
44	1	2d.
45	1	4d.

TABLE 9 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1546		
47	1	4d.
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55	1	4d.
56		
57		
58	1	2s.

TABLE 10

Bequests to the Mercers Chapel and to the altars of St. John and St. Katherine in St. Michael's.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7	1	20s. for ornaments(K).
8	1	3s.4d.(K).
9	1	6s.8d. 'to the gildyng of Seynt John and Seynt Kateryn'.
10		
11	1	3s.4d. to the Mercers Chapel.
12		
13	1	6d.(K).
14	1	2s.(K).
15		
16		
17	1	20s. 'unto the mendyng & renewyng of suche vestiments as ben belonginge to the awter of saint Kateryn'
18	3	6s.8d. 'in wax to be spent at masse tymes'(K). 20s.(J). 12d.(K).
19		
20		
21		
22		
23	1	3s.4d.(K).
24	1	12d.(K).
25	1	10s. and a torch of wax 3 lbs. in weight'.*.
26	1	6s.8d.(K).
27		
28		
29		
30	1	12d.(K).
31		
32		
33	1	4d.(K).
34	1	2d.(K).
35		
36		
37		
38	2	6d.(K). 4d.(K).
39	1	3s.4d.(K).
40	1	3s.4d. towards ornaments for the Mercers altar.
41		
42		
43		

TABLE 10 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1544	2	5d.(K). 40s. for vestments(K).
45	2	3s.4d.(K). 20d. to the Mercers altar.
46		
47		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55	1	4d.(K).
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 11

Bequests to the Smiths Chapel and St. Andrew's altar in St. Michael's.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98	1	2s. 'to the gildyng of our lady atte Smythes awter'.
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5	1	12d.
6		
7		
8		
9		
10	2	4d. 4d.
11	1	20d.
12		
13	1	12d.
14	1	12d.
15		
16		
17		
18	2	6s.8d. 'in wax to be spent at masse tymes'. 'A vestement of white damaske of the value of vli.'.
19		
20		
21	1	6d.
22		
23	1	12d.
24		
25		
26	1	4d.
27		
28		
29		
30		
31	1	8d.
32		
33	1	4d.
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39	1	3s.4d.
40		
41	2	2d. 12d.**
42	1	4d.
43		
44	2	6d. 4d.

TABLE 1[illegible] continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1545	1	4d.
46	1	4d.
47		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57	1	5s. 'thoward the Reparacon of the Smythes Autur'.
58		

TABLE 12
Bequests to the Girdlers Chapel and to St. Anne's altar in St. Michael's.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10	2	8d. 6s.8d.
11		
12		
13		
14		
15	1	3s.4d.*
16		
17		
18	1	6s.8d. 'in wax to be spent at masse tymes'.
19	1	12d.*
20		
21	1	6d.
22		
23	2	12d. 6d.
24	1	8d.
25		
26		
27		
28		
29	1	8d.
30		
31	1	4d.
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38	1	4d.
39	1	3s.4d.
40		
41	1	2d.
42	1	12d.
43		
44		
45		
46		

TABLE 12 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1547		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 13
Bequests to the Cardmakers and Sadlers(and from 1537 the Cappers) Chapel and to St. Thomas's altar in St. Michael's.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89	1	10s. for ornaments.
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18	1	6s.8d. 'in wax to be spent at masse tymes'.
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26	1	4d.
27		
28		
29		
30		
31	1	4d.
32	1	6s.8d.*
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38	2	4d. 4d.
39	1	3s.4d.
40		
41		
42		
43		
44		
45		
46		

TABLE 13 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1547		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56	1	6d.
57		
58		

TABLE 14
Bequests to St. Laurence's Chapel and altar in St. Michael's.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10	2	12d. 8d.
11	1	2s.
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18	1	6s.8d. 'in wax to be spent at masse tymes'.
19	1	3s.4d.'
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28	1	20d. 'to the maynetenyng of light within the Chapell'.
29		
30		
31		
32		
33		
34	1	4d.
35		
36		
37	1	4d.
38	1	4d.
39	1	3s.4d.
40		
41	1	12d.
42		
43		
44		
45		
46		
47		

TABLE 14 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 15
Bequests to the Trinity altar in St. Michael's.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		
31		
32		
33		
34		
35	1	4d.
36		
37		
38	1	4d.
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		
44		
45		
46		
47		

TABLE 15 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 16

Bequests to St. Loy's altar(probably in the Smiths Chapel) in St. Michael's.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38	1	6d.
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		
44		
45		
46		

TABLE 16 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1547		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 17

Bequests to Holy Trinity church.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89	1	6s.8d. for 'necessary' repairs.
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97	1	6s.8d. for repairs.
98		
99		
1500		
1	1	20d. for repairs.
2		
3		
4	1	12d. for repairs.
5		
6	1	10s. for repairs.
7		
8		
9	2	20s. 'towarde the coveringe of the Trinitie church'. 12d. for repairs.
10	1	5s. for repairs.
11	1	20s. 'to the churche warks'.
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	1	12d. 'to the reparacon of the same church warke'.
17		
18	1	6s.8d. for repairs.
19	1	40s. for repairs.
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25	1	20d. for repairs.
26	1	40s. for repairs.
27		
28		
29	2	12d. 3s. to the 'churche warke'.
30	1	4d.
31	1	6d. 'to the Churche Warke'.
32		
33	1	4d. for repairs.
34	1	12d. 'to ye Churche Warke'.
35		
36	1	4d. 'to ye Repracion of ye said churche'.
37		
38	2	4s. 'to ye company of ye vestery ornaments And vesty ents'. 20d. 'to ye reparacyon & ye ornaments of ye vestry of ye trynytye charche'.
39		
40	1	20s. for repairs.
41		
42		
43		

TABLE 17 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1544		
45		
46	1	Two streamers.
47		
48		
49		
50	1	10s.
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58	1	12d. for repairs.

TABLE 18
Bequests to the high altar of Holy Trinity for tithes forgotten.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94	1	6s.8d.
95	1	6s.8d.
96		
97	1	20s.
98		
99		
1500		
1	1	3s.4d.
2		
3	2	3s.4d. 3s.4d.
4	2	3s.4d. 3s.4d.
5	1	20s.
6	1	6s.8d.
7	2	6s.8d. 4s.4d.
8		
9	2	3s.4d. 12d.
10	3	20s. 20s. 6s.8d.
11	2	2s. 3s.4d. and more at doe.
12		
13	1	6s.8d.
14		
15		
16	2	6s.8d. 5s.
17		
18	2	6s.8d. 40s.
19	1	10s.
20		
21	1	6s.8d.
22		
23	1	3s.4d.
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29	1	20d.
30	3	6d. 12d. 20s.
31	4	12d. 8d. 8d. 12d.
32		
33		
34	1	12d.
35		
36		
37		
38		
39	4	4d. 4d. 12d. 12d.
40	1	4d.
41		
42	1	12d.
43	1	6s.8d.
44	1	3s.4d.
45	1	4d.
46		
47		

TABLE 18 contined.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53	2	12d. 6d.
54	1	4d.
55		
56	2	20d. 12d.
57	5	? 6d. 6d. 8d. 20d.
58	9	? 3s.4d. 12d. 8d. 20d. 3s.4d. 12d. 6d. 12d.

TABLE 19
Bequests to 'every chapel' or 'every altar' in Holy Trinity.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4	1	24lbs. of wax to be given to altars where mass is celebrated in amounts of 1lb.
5		
6	1	3s.*
7		
8		
9	2	8d. and a taper.* 12d.**
10	1	8d.
11	1	8d.*
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	2	4d. 20d.**
17		
18	2	12d. 20d.
19	1	12d.*
20		
21	1	'To vi oder Aulters in the saide Churche 12d. a pece'.*
22		
23	1	12d.
24	1	12d.*
25		
26		
27		
28	1	2d.*
29		
30	2	4d.* 20d.**
31	3	4d.* 4d.** 3d.***
32	1	4d.*
33		
34	2	4d.* 4d.*
35		
36	1	2d.*
37		
38	2	'To All other Auters in ye church 2d. A pece excepte Saynte Annys Auter'.* 4d.**
39	2	2d.* 3d.**
40		
41		
42	2	2d.* 4d.**
43	2	12d. for ornaments.* 4d.**
44	1	4d.*
45		

TABLE 19 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1546	1	'to every other Aulter in the same churche whiche haithe a preyste synginge at it 4d.'.
47		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54	1	4d. 'to every awtar in the Trinete Churche that masse is seide at'.
55		
56		
57	1	4d. 'to everye autur where masse his sayd in the same cherche'.
58	1	10d.

For explanation of asterisks, see table 6.

TABLE 20
Bequests to the high altar of Holy Trinity.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89	1	6s.8d.
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10	1	20d.
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	1	3s.4d.*
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24	1	3s.4d.**
25	1	3s.4d.
26		
27		
28	1	?*
29	1	12d.
30		
31	1	12d.
32	1	3s.4d.*
33	1	12d.
34	2	3s.4d.* 12d.*
35	1	4d.
36	2	7d. 8d.*
37	7	12d. 12d. 8d. 6d. 4d. 2d. 2d.
38	9	12d. 12d. 8d. 12d.* 12d.** 2s. 2d. 12d.
39	1	8d.
40	1	3s.4d.
41	2	4d. 8d.
42	2	3s.4d.* 8d.*
43	3	8d. 4d. 12d.*
44	2	4d. 6s.8d.
45	2	4d. 2d.
46	3	12d. 4d. 12d.*
47		

TABLE 20 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57	1	12d.
58	1	3s.4d.

TABLE 21
Bequests to the Jesus altar in Holy Trinity.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94	1	3s.4d.
95	1	3s.4d.
96		
97	1	6s.8d.
98		
99		
1500		
1	2	20d. 12d.
2		
3		
4	2	12d. 20d.
5		
6	1	3s.4d.*
7	1	'A boke called vita xpi'.
8		
9	2	20d. and a taper.* 12d.**
10		
11	1	2s.
12		
13	1	6s.8d. 'to the mayntenaunce of the lightis afore the Alter'.
14		
15		
16	3	12d.* 6s.8d.** 12d. and 'a crucyfix of sylver and gylt to hang aboute the necke of thymage of Jesu ther'.
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26	1	3s.4d.
27		
28		
29	1	20d.
30	4	12d.* 2d. 4d. 20d.**
31	4	6d.* 4d. 2d. 4d.**
32		
33	1	4d.
34	2	6d. 6d.*
35	1	4d.*
36	2	4d. A pair of beads and a ring.*
37	4	4d. 2d. 6d. 4d.
38	5	2d. 2d. 4d. 4d.* 12d. 12d.
39	2	4d.* 6d.
40	1	2d.
41	1	4d.
42	2	6d. 4d.*
43	2	5s. 6d.*
44	3	4d. 2d. 8d.
45	3	4d. 2d. 4d.
46	3	4d. 4d. 6d.*
47		

TABLE 21 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56	1	2s.
57	1	4d.
58	5	12d. 4d. 12d. 12d. 12d.

TABLE 22
Bequests to Our Lady's Chapel and altar in Holy Trinity.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93	1	4d.
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4	2	12d. 8d.
5	1	6s.8d.
6	1	3s.4d.
7	2	'A Byble in Englisshe'. 2s.
8		
9	2	12d. and a taper.* 8d.**
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	2	12d.* 12d.
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26	1	3s.4d.
27		
28		
29	1	2s.
30	4	12d.* 4d. 20d.*** 2d.
31	3	8d.** 4d. 4d.***
32		
33		
34	1	6d.
35		
36	1	4d.
37	2	2d. 6d.
38	6	2d. 2d. 4d. 12d. 2d. 8d.
39	2	4d.* 6d.
40	1	'An aulter cloth & a towyl'.
41	1	4d.
42	2	'An Alter clothe'. 8d.**
43	2	4d. 5s.* 6d.**
44		
45	1	4d.
46	1	4d.
47		

TABLE 22 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58	2	12d. 'towards ye Repairyng of the alter ther' and 5s.8d. more 'yf the said alter be newe mendyd & made within a twelmownth after my decease'. 4d.

TABLE 23
Bequests to St. Thomas's Chapel and altar in Holy Trinity.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	1	4d.
17		
18		
19		
20		
21	1	3s.4d.*
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29	1	16d.
30	1	4d.
31		
32	1	8d.*
33	1	4d.
34		
35		
36		
37	1	4d.
38	1	4d.
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		
44	1	8d.*
45		
46	1	12d.
47		

TABLE 23 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 24
Bequests to the Corpus Christi Chapel and altar in Holy Trinity.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11	1	16d.*
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	1	8d.
17		
18		
19	1	3s.4d.*
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29	1	16d.
30		
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36	1	4d.
37	1	4d.
38	1	4d.
39		
40		
41		
42		
43	1	12d.*
44	1	12d.
45		
46		
47		

TABLE 24 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 25

Bequests to the Holy Rood/Cross Chapel and altar in Holy Trinity.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26	1	'ii vestiments [&] £6 13s.4d., to be ordered and appoynted by the discretions of my executors and overseers'.
27		
28		
29	1	12d.
30		
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37	2	4d. 4d.
38	1	2d.
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		
44		
45	1	4d.
46		

TABLE 25 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1547		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 26

Bequests to St. Andrews Chapel and altar in Holy Trinity.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	1	4d.
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29	1	16d.
30	2	12d. 2d.
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37	1	2d.
38		
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		
44		
45		
46		
47		

TABLE 26 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 27

Bequests to St. Anne's Chapel and altar (probably the Dyers) in Holy Trinity.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	1	12d.
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29	1	12d.
30		
31		
32		
33		
34	1	20d.*
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		
44	2	4d. 4d.
45		
46		

TABLE 27 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1547		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 28
Bequests to All Saints/Hallows Chapel and altar in Holy Trinity.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	1	4d.
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26	1	3s.4d.
27		
28		
29	1	16d.
30		
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37	1	2d.
38		
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		
44		
45		
46		
47		

TABLE 28 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 29

Bequests to the Weavers free standing chapel of St. James.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		
31		
32	1	'my best scarlet gowne'.
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		
44		
45		
46		
47		

TABLE 29 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1547		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 30

Bequests to the Shermen and Tailors free standing chapel of St. George.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	1	20s.'to the mayntenyng of Saint George chappell' and 'a Short gown of Skarlet'.
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38	1	3s.4d.
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		
44		
45	1	12d.
46		

TABLE 30 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 31

Bequests to St. Nicholas's altar in the Hospital of St. John the Baptist.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40		
41	1	8d.
42		
43	1	6d.
44		
45		

TABLE 32
Bequests to other churches and chapels.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485	1	A vestment to the church of 'Sancti Ricardi Episcopi' in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93	2	A vestment worth 4mks., 40s. for repairs and 'my best iron bounde cofur' to Sutton [Coldfield ?] church and 6s.8d. to Stoneleigh church and bridge. 40s. for a vestment to Rowley church, Shrops.
94		
95		
96		
97		
98	1	20s. and two streamers to Worleston church, Ches.
99	1	40s. to Tiffield church, Northants., 40s. to Weedon church, Northants., 40s. to the church of Newport Pagnell, Beds. and 20s. to Our Lady Chapel of 'Devlin' [sic]. 'at the brigge ende'.
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7	2	£20 'to the church and place' of Sulby, Northants. for reparations, 'And they to pray for my soule and all xpen soules'. 40s. 'to the making of a newe Chapell of Saint John the Baptiste within the parisshe Churche of Walsall' and 'a bible in englisshe'.
8		
9	3	'A vestment for a prest with all that longyth therto at masse' price £3 to Kirkby church, Leics. 6s.8d. to 'Howett' [sic] church 'to pray for me'. 10s. for repairs and two of his best streamers to 'Sybston' [sic] church.
10	4	6s.8d. to Sutton [Coldfield ?] church. 20s. to Lilbourne church, Northants. 6s.8d. to St. Michael's church Newnham, Hants. 'where I was born' and 3s.4d. to Our Lady's church of Everton, Hants. 5mks. for repairs, 10mks. to buy a cope and a vestment and two streamers with 'ii sperys' to 'Estame' [sic] church.
11	3	20s. to repair Wrexham church, Ches. 5s. each to Bedford church, Northants. and Exhall church, co. city of Coventry, for repairs and 3s.4d. to Bulkington church, Warw. 10s. to St. Leonard's church, Bridgenorth, Staffs. for repairs, 10s. to the church of Mary Magdelene of the same place and 10s. and a streamer to Claverley church near the same 'where I was born'.
12	2	20s. for the repair of the steeple of Ryton church, Warw. 20s. St. Mary's church, Stoneleigh, 20s. to the church of Burton Dasset, 'in the honour of all hallows', 20s. to Hednell church, Warw. 'in the honour of saint Ellen to be bestowed in lights of waxe and a plate to sett it in', 10s. to Claybrooke church, Leics., 3s.4d. to 'Sherneford' [sic] church and 10s. to Bulkington church, Warw.
13	1	20s. to 'Goton' [sic] church, 20s. to 'Stoe' [sic] church 'there as my father and mother lyes' and 20s. to 'Weston' [sic] 'there as my brother dwellyth'.

TABLE 32 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1514		
15		
16	3	20d. to Baginton church, Warw. 20s. to Pontesbury church, Shrops. 'towarde the chirch werke' and Our Lady's Chapel in the same church and a vestment each to four unnamed parish churches in Cardiganshire. 20d. to Allesley church, Warw. 'to the churche werke'. 3s.4d. to be given every Whit Monday to Fillongley church, Warw. by his wife during her life to be prayed for and 20d. to Corley church, Warw. 'to the churche werke'.
17		
18	2	A chalice to ? church in Lancashire. 40s. to Kenilworth church.
19	1	20s. and two of his best streamers with their poles to 'Alderwas' [sic] church 'where I was borne' and 'to our lady of 'Lowpyn' [sic] church 'a Jurnet of Sarcenet'.
20		
21	1	6s.8d. to Ansty church, co. city of Coventry.
22		
23	2	20s. to Walsall church 'towarde the making of saint Johns Chapell' and the 40s. bequeathed by his father for the same purpose and 20s. to the building of the steeple of Ryton church, Warw. 3s.4d. to Wyken church, co. city of Coventry, 6s.8d. to the church of West Bromwich and 10s. to Wakefield church.
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29	1	3s.4d. to Withybrooke church, 3s.4d. to Foleshill church, co city of Coventry and 2s. to Sowe church, co. city of Coventry.
30	2	6s.8d. 'to the parish church where I was borne'. 'A goblet of silver and parcell gilt' to Filongley church, Warw. to the intent 'that it shall serve the howsling people in the said parishe church upon Ester day And that the vicar of the said churche shall desire all the parishens upon every Ester saye and that at the high masse and the secunde every man and wooman to saye a pater noster and an Ave for the soule of Thomas Waryn Margery his wife and all xpen soules', 'my best skarlett gown or the value' to be prayed for upon Easter Day in the same way and two streamers to St. Thomas's Chapel in the same church.
31	1	4d. to 'saynt modewayne of Hueton' [sic].
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37	1	8d. to Braunstone church, Leics.
38	1	20d. to Our Lady's Chapel in Mowsley church. leics.
39		
40		
41		
42	1	13s.4d. to Oversley church, Warw.
43	1	6s.8d. to Arley church, Warw. and a streamer to Ryton church, Warw.
44	2	A silver chalice of 40s. or more to Audley church, Staffs. 'where I was born' to have him in better remembrance. Two streamers to Allesley church, Warw.
45	1	£30 to the 'Churche of sante Chrsitopher'.
46	2	Two streamers worth 40s. to St. Peter's church, Hartshorne, Derbs. 'for a remembraunce of my fathers solle & mothers to to be orayed for'. 6s.8d. to the parish church of 'Saynt ursula'.

TABLE 32 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1547		
48		
49		
50	1	6s.8d. to Wyken church, co city of Coventry, and 6s.8d. to Ansty church, co city of Coventry.
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 33
Bequests to 'the mother church' of Coventry for repairs.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10	1	8d.
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	1	4d.
17		
18		
19		
20		
21	1	4d.
22	1	4d.
23	3	3s.4d. 4d. 3d.
24	2	4d. 4d.
25		
26	2	2d. 20d.
27		
28	2	4d. 4d.
29	2	4d. 4d.
30	4	3d. 1d. 2d. 2d.
31	8	2d. 4d. 4d. 2d. 2d. 1d. 3d. 2d.
32	1	12d.
33	5	2d. 2d. 2d. 1d. 4d.
34	4	1d. 1d. 4d. 4d.
35	3	1d. 1d. 4d.
36	3	2d. 2d 2d.
37	5	2d. 2d. 2d. 2d. 2d.
38	6	2d. 2d. 2d. 2d. 2d. 1d.
39		

TABLE 34

Bequests to 'the mother church' of Lichfield for repairs.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1	1	4d.
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10	1	8d.
11		
12		
13		
14		
15	1	?
16	1	4d.
17		
18		
19		
20		
21	1	4d.
22	1	4d.
23	3	3s.4d. 4d. 3d.
24	2	4d. 4d.
25		
26	2	2d. 20d.
27		
28	2	4d. 4d.
29	2	4d. 4d.
30	4	3d. 1d. 2d. 2d.
31	8	2d. 4d. 4d. 2d. 2d. 1d. 3d. 2d.
32	1	12d.
33	5	2d. 2d. 2d. 1d. 4d.
34	5	1d. 1d. 2d. 6d. 4d.
35	2	1d. 1d.
36	3	2d. 2d. 2d.
37	5	2d. 2d. 2d. 2d. 2d.
38	5	2d. 2d. 2d. 2d. 1d.
39	1	2d.
40		
41		
42	1	2d.
43	1	4d.
44	3	2d. 2d. 4d.
45	1	4d.
46	6	2d. 2d. 2d. 4d. 2d. 2d.
47		

TABLE 34 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58	3	4d. ? 8d.

TABLE 35
Bequests to the cathedral priory.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94	1	5s.
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7	1	£5 to pray for her, her husband and her best friends.
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24	1	4d. to every monk both priest and novice.
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		
31	1	'My beste leverey cote' to be prayed for.
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		

TABLE 36
Bequests to the Charterhouse.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485	1	6s.8d.
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92	1	6s.8d.
93		
94	1	10s.
95	1	12d.
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500	1	10s.
1	1	3s.4d.
2	1	10s.
3		
4		
5	3	6s.8d. 20d. 6s.8d.
6		
7	1	10s.
8		
9	1	6s.8d.
10	2	20s. 6s.8d.
11	4	3s.4d. 3s.4d. 10s. 20d.
12	1	6s.8d.
13	1	3s.4d.
14	1	2s.
15		
16		
17	2	6s.8d. £3 6s.8d.
18	2	20s. 20s.
19	2	40s. 10s.
20		
21		
22		
23	1	3s.4d.
24	1	10s.
25		
26		
27		
28		
29	4	3s.4d. 3s.4d. 'A lateys windowe by the streate . . . And . . . at the chymneys ende in the parlour twoo gamardes [sic] to lay in comen' and 6s.8d. in money.
30	1	£10.
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		

TABLE 37
Bequests to the Greyfriars.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485	1	6s.8d.
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93	2	6s.8d. 3s.4d.
94		
95	1	12d.
96	1	5s.
97		
98		
99		
1500	1	10s.
1	1	3s.4d.
2		
3		
4		
5	2	6s.8d. 3s.4d.
6	1	13s.4d.
7	3	10s. 10s. 3s.4d.
8		
9	1	6s.8d.
10	4	20s. 6s.8d. 6s.8d. 3s.4d.
11	2	3s.4d. 3s.4d.
12	1	6s.8d.
13	1	3s.4d.
14		
15		
16	1	20d.
17	1	20s.
18	2	10s. 20s.
19	1	13d. to every priest and 6s. to every novice.
20		
21		
22		
23	1	3s.4d.
24	2	6s.8d. 3s.4d.
25	1	40s.
26	1	?
27		
28	1	5s.
29	2	3s.4d. 3s.4d.
30	3	3s.4d. 5s. 3s.4d.
31	1	'A cowchid clothe'.
32		
33	1	3s.4d.
34	1	6s.8d.
35		
36	1	3s.4d.
37		
38	1	2d.

TABLE 38
Bequests to the Whitefriars.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485	1	6s.8d.
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92	1	6s.8d.
93	2	6s.8d. 3s.4d.
94	1	10s.
95	1	12d.
96	1	5s.
97		
98		
99		
1500	1	10s.
1	1	3s.4d.
2	1	10s.
3		
4		
5	2	6s.8d. 3s.4d.
6	1	10s.
7	3	10s. 10s. 3s.4d.
8		
9	1	6s.8d.
10	4	20s. 6s.8d. 6s.8d. 3s.4d.
11	2	3s.4d. 3s.4d.
12	1	6s.8d.
13	1	3s.4d.
14		
15		
16	1	20d.
17	1	20s.
18	2	10s. 20s.
19		
20		
21		
22		
23	1	3s.4d.
24	2	6s.8d. 3s.4d.
25	1	40s.
26		
27		
28	1	5s.
29	2	3s.4d. 3s.4d.
30	4	3s.4d. 5s. 5s. 3s.4d.
31		
32		
33	1	3s.4d.
34	1	6s.8d.
35		
36	1	3s.4d.
37		
38	1	2d.

TABLE 39
Bequests to other religious houses.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9	1	20s. to the Blackfriars of 'Devlin' [sic].
10		
11	1	6s.8d. to the Greyfriars of Bridgenorth, Staffs.
12	1	20s. to the monastery of Combe.
13		
14		
15		
16	1	10s. to the Greyfriars of Shrewsbury.
17		
18	1	£4 to the monastery of Kenilworth.
19	2	20s. to the monastery of Grace Dieu, Leicester.
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26	1	A quarter of a ton of wax to all the houses of Observant Friars and Charterhouses in England to pray for his soul, 'a goblet with a cover and a dosen spones of silver' to the hall of the monastery of Syon and 100 lbs. of wax to the church of the same monastery to pray for his soul and 40s. to the monastery of Burnham, Bucks.
27		
28		
29		
30	1	£6 13s.4d. to the monastery of Combe and 20s. to the Blackfriars of [London ?].
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40		

TABLE 40

Bequests to religious houses to be prayed for 'as a brother' of their order.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99	1	20s. to the monastery of 'Devlin' [sic].
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6	1	20s. to the monasteries of Gloucester, Tewkesbury, Evesham, Hailles, Kenilworth, Combe, Leicester, Stoneleigh, Arbury, Makstoke, Bordesley and Coventry.
7	1	20s. to the monasteries of Stoneleigh, Makstoke, Combe and Hailles.
8		
9		
10		
11		
12	1	20s. to the monasteries of Arbury and Coventry and 10s to the Charterhouse and Whitefriars of Coventry.
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18	1	'A cupp of Silver' to the monastery of Coventry and 'A Nott' [sic] to that of Winchecombe.
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25	1	6s.8d. to the monastery of Coventry 'to be a hole brother there And yf I be not brother there but 3s.4d.'.
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40		

TABLE 41
Bequests to crafts.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10	2	Dyers-3s.4d. Drapers-3s.4d. of which 20d. was for the bearers of his body.
11		
12	1	Every craft which maintained a chapel 6s.8d. and every other one 3s.4d.
13		
14		
15	1	Girdlers-6s.8d.
16		
17	1	Grocers-10s. to bbtc, Drapers, Shermen and Tailors and Tanners-6s.8d. towards their priests wages and 3s.4d. to every other craft which maintained a priest. Also, to the Grocers 'my lyned scarlet gowne without ffurre and my scarlet cloke' and the Tanners 'my lyned Crymsyn gown not furred' to be used by them at the time of their pageant and 3s.4d. to every other craft which maintained or contributed to a pageant.
18	2	Every craft which maintained a priest 6s.8d. and every other one 3s.4d. Grocers?6s.8d. to bbtc.
19	1	Mercers-3s.4d., Drapers-3s.4d. and Shermen and Tailors, Smiths, Weavers, Fishmongers and Dyers-2s.
20		
21		
22		
23	1	Mercers and Cardmakers-6s.8d. and every other craft which will make an offering the day of his burial 12d.
24	2	Mercers and Dyers-6s.8d., Drapers-3s.4d. and every other craft 16d. Mercers, Drapers, Cardmakers and Girdlers-3s.4d.
25		
26	1	Every craft which maintained a priest 10s. to bbtc 'and theire prests to have the names of me and of my wife before them on a Table on their Aulters for the space of a yere' and to every other craft to bbtc 5s.
27		
28		
29	1	Mercers-2s. and to each bearer of his body 4d.
30	4	Butchers-20s. and 'to the bochers wyffes' 4s. The Dyers priest 4s. Dyers-20d. and every other craft of which he was a brother 12d. Cappers-6s.8d. Request for Shermen and Tailors to bbtc.

TABLE 41 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1531	2	Shermen and Tailors, Smiths and Chandlers-3s.4d. and Cardmakers and Saddlers-12d. to bbtc. Butchers-2s. to bbtc.
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38	4	Shermen and Tailors-3s.4d. and to each of the bearers of his body 4d. Butchers-6s.8d. and Corvisers-20d. Drapers-5s. to bbtc. Shermen and Tailors-3s.4d. and 4d. to each of the four men who will bear his body.
39	1	Drapers-6s.8d. to bbtc.
40	2	Butchers and Weavers-doe. to bbtc. Eight unnamed crafts 20d. to bbtc.
41	2	Weavers-20d. and Shermen and Tailors-16d. Girdlers, Mercers, Drapers and Cappers-3s.4d. to bbtc.
42	4	Girdlers, Mercers and Drapers-3s.4d. to be present at burial. Butchers-3s.4d. Butchers-3s.4d. Drapers-'The freedome & Auctoritie as I tokke by feofement at the house at Exall for the use of the feloshippe'.
43		
44	4	Skinners-6s.8d. Drapers-3s.4d. to bbtc. Skinners-5s. Mercers-3s.4d., Drapers-2s.8d. Shermen and Tailors. Cappers, Smiths, and Butchers-2s.4d. Bakers, Weavers, Corvisers, Walkers, Tanners, Wittawers, Dyers and Girdlers-20d. to bbtc.
45	3	Cappers-2s.4d. and Weavers-20d. to bbtc and 8d. to the bearers of his body 'to drinke'. Request for Shermen and Tailors to bbtc. The journeymen Cappers-12d. to bbtc.
46	2	Drapers-3s.4d. to bbtc. Innholders and Shermen and Tailors-2s. to bbtc.
47		
48	2	'the compeni of masters' of the Cappers-16d. to bbtc. Corvisers-3s.4d. to bbtc.
49	2	'every oone of my companye that belongythe to mr mayor'-4d. Whittawers-16d. to bbtc.
50	2	Weavers-4s. and 2s. to the bearers of his body. Every craft of the city to pray for him, receiving for their pains at the doe.
51	3	Cappers-5s. 'to make merry with'. Shermen and Tailors 12d. to each of twenty poor members of the craft. Mercers-3s.4d. to bbtc.
52	2	Butchers-5s. and 5s. to their wives 'to make merye Amongst theme'. Weavers-5s. to bbtc and 2s. to their wives 'to make murie'.
53	3	Butchers-6s.8d. Shermen and Tailors-3s.4d. Cappers-6s.8d.
54	1	Shermen and Tailors-3s.4d. to bbtc and to 'make mery withall'.
55		
56	1	Weavers-3s.4d.
57	3	Butchers-5s.4d. Dyers-2s. to bbtc 'and offer at the masse'. Smiths-'a clothe of grene velvet to cover the corpus withall'.
58	9	Butchers-five closes between Filongley and Corley. Bakers-'A paire of Almande Ryvetts a Sallet A gorgett a paire of splents and a pole'. Surgeon and Barbers-10s. Corvisers-3s.4d. Surgeons and Barbers-10s. Weavers-3s.4d. and Smiths-2s. Butchers-10s. and Cappers. Weavers, Shermen and Tailors and Smiths-2s. Butchers-3s.4d. Cappers-3s.4d., Smiths, Shermen and Tailors and Chandlers-'To have for ther paynes accordyng to theere accustomed dutye' and each of the four bearers of his body to have 4d.

TABLE 42
Requests for additional funeral services: placebo, dirge and requiem mass, by the secular clergy.

Year.	No.	Request.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6	1	The services in every parish church within six miles of Coventry.
7		
8		
9		
10	1	St.M and HT-all/?/?.
11		
12		
13		
14		
15	2	St.M-6/2/?. St.M-all/?/?.
16		
17		
18		
19	1	St.M, HT, HTG, CCG and H-all/?/? plus bbtc.
20		
21		
22		
23		
24	1	St.M and HT-all/?/?.
25		
26	2	St.M-10/?/?, HTG and CCG-all/?/?. S-all/?/? plus bbtc.
27		
28		
29	1	St.M, HTG and CCG-all/?/?.
30		
31	2	St.M-12/4/? and HTG-all/?/?. St.M-6/3/?.
32		
33	2	St.M, HTG and CCG to bbtc only. St.M-6/3/2 to bbtc only.
34	3	St.M-6/3/?. St.M, HT and HTG-all/?/?. St.M, HT and HTG-all/?/?.
35		
36		
37		
38	4	HT, CCG and HTG-all/?/? plus bbtc. St.M-all/?/? plus bbtc. St.M-all/?/?, HTG and CCG-all/?/? to bbtc only. St.M, HTG and CCG-all/?/?.
39	1	St.M-8/3/2 plus bbtc.
40	2	S-all/?/? plus bbtc. S-all/?/? plus bbtc.
41	5	St.M-12/3/2 plus bbtc. St.M-6/?/? plus bbtc. St.M-12/3/? plus bbtc. S-all/?/? plus bbtc. St.M-12/?/? plus bbtc.
42	2	St.M-doe/?/?. St.M-12/?/? plus bbtc.

TABLE 42 contined.

Year.	No.	Request.
1543	2	St.M-all/?/? plus bbtc. St.M-all/?/? plus bbtc.
44	5	St.M-all/?/? plus bbtc. St.M-7/2/? to bbtc only. St.M and St.G-all/?/?. St.M-8/4/2. St.M, CCG and HTG-all/?/? plus bbtc.
45	4	St.M-all/?/?. St.M-12/4/2. HT-all/?/?. S-all/?/? plus bbtc.
46	3	S-all/?/? plus bbtc. St.M-6/3/2. St.M-10/3/2 plus bbtc.
47		
48	1	St.M-all/all/?*.
49		
50		
51		
52	1	St.M-all/all/?*.
53	1	St.M-?/all/?*.
54		
55		
56		
57	1	St.M-all/all/?.
58	5	St.M and HT-all/?/?. St.M-all/all/? St.M and HT-all/all/?. St.M and HT-?/?/?. St.M, HT and B-all/all/? plus bbtc.

The figures between the slashes are in the order of the numbers of priests, clerks and children that the testator requested to perform his or her funeral services. A question mark indicates that the testator did not specify how many.

A few testators requested additional priests, clerks and children to perform the Protestant services in Edward VI's reign. Such requests are indicated by asterisks.

TABLE 43
Requests for additional funeral services: placebo, dirge and requiem mass, by the regular clergy.

Year.	No.	Request.
1485		
86	1	CP and CH.
87		
88		
89	1	H.
90		
91		
92		
93	1	CP, CH, GF, WF and H.
94	1	CP, CH, GF, WF and H.
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1	2	CP, CH, GF, WF, H and Stoneleigh. CP.
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7	1	CP, CH, GF plus bbtc and WF plus bbtc.
8		
9	1	GF and WF.
10	3	Combe and Stoneleigh. CH. Evesham.
11	1	GF and WF.
12		
13		
14	1	GF to bbtc only and WF to bbtc only.
15		
16	1	CH, GF, WF and H.
17		
18		
19	2	GF to bbtc only and WF to bbtc only. Kenilworth and Makstoke.
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26	1	CH, GF and WF.
27		
28	1	?
29	1	GF and WF.
30	1	CP, GF, WF and the Blackfriars of [London ?].
31	1	GF to bbtc only and WF to bbtc only.
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38	1	WF to bbtc only.
39		
40		

TABLE 44

Requests for additional peals of bells at burial.

Year.	No.	Request.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29	1	6 peals.
30		
31	1	'so long as my body is unbewied every day iii peels'.
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38	1	4 peals in HT and 4 peals in St.M.
39	1	1 peal immeadiately after death, 1 peal as his body goes to the church and 1 peal as he is buried.
40		
41		
42		
43		
44	1	5 peals 'to move good peple to pray for my solle and all chrsiten solls'.

TABLE 44 continued.

Year.	No.	Request.
1545	1	7 peals.
46		
47		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 45

Requests for additional tapers and/or tapers at burial.

Year.	No.	Request.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7	1	5 torches and 12 tapers, and after burial the torches to remain to the high altar 'to geve light to the Sacrament', and the altars of Our Lady, Jesus, St. Katherine and St. Anne.
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24	1	4 torches and 14 tapers.
25		
26		
27		
28		
29	1	12 tapers.
30		
31		
32		
33	1	12 tapers.
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40		
41		
42		
43	1	10 tapers.
44		
45		

TABLE 45 continued.

Year.	No.	Request
1546		
47		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58	1	12 tapers.

TABLE 46

Bequests for food and drink after burial.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10	1	'I will that my neyburs have a Recreacon after my burynge of powdrede befe and musterd and a nother dishe that is convenient for them at that tyme. And yf it happyn upon the ffishe daye I put it to myn executrice and my overseers discrecon'.
11		
12		
13		
14	1	40s. for a 'recreation' among his neighbours.
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		
31	1	10s. 'in mete and drinke' for his neighbours.
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		

TABLE 46 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1544	2	3s.4d. to be 'bestowyed a mongst my neybers to mayke mery and drynke together'. 'I will that my neyburs shall have a honest dynar the day of my buriall'.
45		
46		
47		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52	1	'I will that all my neighbors shall have a dynnar on the daye of my buriall by the Oversight of my Executors'.
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58	1	'I wyll that my executryx shall make a denare for my neburs within ye ward whyche I have be en accustomyd to live in ' or else they were to have 12d. each.

TABLE 47

Requests by testators for their executors to dispose for their souls after their own discretion.

Year.	No.	
1485		
86		(1)
87		
88	1	
89	2	(1)
90	1	
91	1	(1)
92	1	(1)
93	1	(1)
94	2	(1)
95	4	
96	1	(1)
97	1	
98	1	(1)
99		
1500	1	(1)
1	2	(1)
2	1	
3	1	
4	2	
5	5	(1)
6	1	
7	1	(2)
8	1	
9	2	(3)
10	3	(4)
11	3	(2)
12	1	
13		
14	1	
15		
16		
17		
18	2	(2)
19		
20		
21	1	(1)
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		(1)
27		
28	1	
29		(1)
30	1	
31	3	(1)
32		
33		
34		
35	1	
36		
37	1	
38	9	(2)
39	4	
40		
41	3	
42	4	(2)
43		
44	4	(2)
45	5	

TABLE 47 continued,

Year.	No.
1546	2
47	1
48	
49	
50	
51	
52	1
53	
54	
55	
56	
57	2
58	1

This table is based only upon provision for trentals, obits and stipendiary priests and no other forms of providing masses and prayers for the soul. The first number indicates the number of testators who made no provision for their souls themselves but instructed their executors to do so after their discretion. The bracketed number indicates how many testators made provision for their souls themselves and also instructed their executors to make provision for the same, which, presumably, meant that their executors were to make further provision.

TABLE 48
Requests for trentals.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86	1	Bradfield.
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92	1	CH, GF and WF.*
93	2	St.M, CP-2, CH-2, GF-2, WF-2 and H-2.* St.M-2.**
94	1	St.M, CH(g), GF(g) and WF(g).
95		
96		
97		
98		
99	1	CH-2, GF-2, WF-2, the CP of 'Devlin' [sic] -2, the Greyfriars of the same-2 and the Blackfriars of the same-2.
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4	1	St.M.
5		
6	2	St.M.* St.M, GF and WF.
7		
8	1	St.M-2.
9	1	GF.
10		
11	3	St.M. St.M. GF and WF.
12		
13		
14	3	St.M, CH(g) and GF. St.M(g), GF(g) and WF(g). Bromsgrove church(g).*
15		
16		
17		
18	2	GF and WF.* Half a trental in HT and half a trental in CH.**
19		
20		
21	1	GF and WF.
22		
23	1	CH, GF and WF.*
24		
25	1	GF-5.
26		
27		
28		
29		
30	1	GF.
31		
32		
33		
34	1	HT-2.
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40	1	St.M-3.*
41	2	St.M. St.M.*
42		
43		
44	2	By 'the poore prest at ye Whytt ffreers'. St.M-5.*
45		

TABLE 48 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1546	2	St.M. HT.
47		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

The number following the place where the trental was to be performed indicates how many were requested. The absence of numbers indicates that only one trental was required.

The tables listing trentals, obits and stipendiary priests can be used in conjunction. Bequests marked with an identical number of asterisks were made by the same testator.

TABLE 49.
Requests for obits.

Year.	No.	Place.
1485		
86	1	CP and CH.
87		
88		
89	2	St.M. St.M(for son's life).
90		
91	1	CCG.
92	1	St.M.*
93	1	St.M.*
94	1	H.
95		
96		
97		
98	1	St.M.
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7	1	St.M.*
8		
9	1	St.M.*
10	3	Dyers. St.M(for wife's life).* HT and CH.**
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	3	Butchers. Shermen and Tailors, HT, WF and CH. HT.*
17	1	HTG.*
18	3	Drapers and GF.* St.M. Butchers.**
19	1	HTG.*
20		
21		
22		
23	3	St.M(3yrs). St.M.* St.M.**
24	1	St.M.*
25		
26	2	Cardmakers. HT.*
27	1	St.M.*
28	2	St.M. HT
29	2	St.M(3yrs). HT.*
30	3	St.M. HT.* Drapers.
31		
32	1	St.M(7yrs).*
33		
34	1	HT.*
35		
36		
37		
38	1	St.M(21yrs).*
39		
40	1	St.M.*
41	2	St.M.* Smiths.
42		
43	2	St.M(until son comes of age). HT.*
44	2	Allesley church. HT.**
45		
46	2	St.M(6yrs). Sheppey church(20yrs).
47		

TABLE 49 continued.

Year.	No.	Place.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57	1	St.M.
58	1	HT and HT(out of lands for as long as leases last).*

Unless otherwise stated testators established their obits in perpetuity.

TABLE 50
Requests for stipendiary priest.

Year.	No.	Place.
1485	1	St.M(1/in perpetuity).
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93	3	Sutton church(1/for wife's life)*. St.M(1/1)**. St.M(1/1).
94		
95		
96	1	Oxford University(1/3).
97		
98		
99	1	St.M(1/1)*.
1500	1	St.M(1/3).
1	1	St.M(1/1).
2		
3		
4		
5	1	St.M(1/1).
6	1	St.M(1/2).
7		
8		
9	1	'a preest . . . the space of iiii yeres in Coventre [St.M] and the space of iii yeres in Kyrkbye'*.
10	3	GF(1/1). St.M(1/3). HT(1/in perpetuity)*.
11	1	HT(1/1).
12		
13		
14	1	Bromsgrove church(1/1)*.
15	1	St.M(1/1).
16		
17		
18	1	Drapers(1/in perpetuity) and Rowley church(1/in perpetuity)*.
19	1	HT(1/1).
20		
21	1	? church(1/?).
22	1	St.M(1/1).
23	1	St.M(1/1)**.
24	1	HT(1/1).
25	1	GF(1/?).
26		
27		
28	1	St.M(1/1 or 2).
29	1	HT(1/1)*.
30	2	HT(1/1)*. Syon(1/in perpetuity).
31	1	St.M(1/1).
32	1	St.M(1/3).
33		
34		
35		
36	1	HT(1/1).
37		
38	1	HT(3/1).
39	1	St.M(1/5).
40	2	St.M(1/1). St.M(1/5)*.
41		
42	1	St.M(1/1).
43	1	HT(1/1)*.
44	1	St.M(1/1)*.
45	1	St.M(1/1).
46		

TABLE 50 continued.

Year.	No.	Place.
1547		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58	1	St.M(1/1).

The first number in the brackets indicates the number of priests requested by testators. The second indicates the number of years for which the priests were to be hired.

TABLE 51.

Requests for poor to carry tapers and/or torches at burials.

Year.	No.	Request.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93	1	20 gowns and hoods to twenty poor men bearing a taper each.
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1	1	24 tapers carried by twenty four poor people who were to receive a black gown each, and 'certyn torches' carried by 'certen persones' who were to have a black gown each.
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7	1	12 tapers carried by twelve poor people who were to have a black gown each.
8		
9		
10	1	5 tapers carried by five poor men who were to have 1d. each and twelve poor men 'such as have blacke gownys' to bring body to church who were to have a pair of new beads and 1d.
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19	1	24 tapers carried by twenty gour poor men who were each to have a black gown with a white hood.
20		
21		
22		
23	1	20 tapers carried by twenty poor men who were each to have a gown 'of blak cotton and white' and 'their dyner and two pens'.
24		
25	1	13 tapers carried by thirteen poor men.
26	1	24 tapers carried by twenty four poor men who were to receive a black gown each.
27		
28		
29		
30		
31	1	13 tapers carried by thirteen poor men who were to have 1d. each.
32		
33		
34	1	6 tapers carried by six poor women who were to have 1d. each.
35		
36		
37		

TABLE 51 continued.

Year.	No.	Request.
1538	2	8 tapers carried by eight poor women who were to have 1d. and 'there dynar' each. 12 tapers carried by twelve children 'beyng in surplis' who were to have 2d. each.
39	1	24 tapers carried by twenty four poor men.
40	1	24 tapers carried by twenty four poor women who were to have 'a blake gowne and a Kercher' each, and 6 torches carried by her servants or tenants.
41		
42		
43	2	12 tapers carried by twelve children 'in there surplessys' who were to have 2d. each. 24 tapers carried by twenty four poor men, and 4 torches carried by four servants.
44	2	12 tapers carried by twelve poor men who were to have 4d. each. 24 tapers carried by twenty four poor men who were to have a black gown each.
45	1	4 tapers carried by four poor women who were to have 2d. each.
46		
47		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 52

Bequests to the poor on the day of burial.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91	1	£5.
92		
93		
94	1	£10.
95		
96		
97		
98		
99	1	?
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6	2	£20. £16.
7	2	£5 on day of burial and a further £5 on the first anniversary of his death. 20mks. within six months of burial.
8		
9	1	50s.
10	2	50s. ?
11		
12		
13	1	40s.
14		
15		
16		
17	1	£10 on day of burial and a further £10 a month later.
18	2	£5. ?
19		
20		
21		
22		
23	1	40s.
24	1	£5 within one week of burial.
25		
26	1	£20 on day of burial and £3 6s.8d. on the day after.
27		
28		
29	1	10s. in bread and money.
30		
31	1	10s. in bread.
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38	3	3s.4d. 20 bread doles. ?
39	1	£10.
40	2	53s.4d. 40s.
41	2	24 bread doles. 20s.
42	1	12d.
43	1	doe.
44	11	20s. 3s.4d. 24 bread doles. 13s. doe. 10s. £7 7s. 36 ½d. bread doles. 48 bread doles. 12s. 13s.4d.

TABLE 52 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1545	6	7s. in bread. 10s. in bread. 3s. 40s. in 2d. doles. 20s. £3.
46		
47		
48		
49	2	5s. 5s.
50		
51		
52	1	40s. in 12d. doles. £4.
53		
54	1	6s.8d.
55		
56	1	2d. to every poor householder in Cook Street.
57	4	12 bread doles. 4d. to every house between the church door of St. Michael's and Baily Lane, 1d. to every house in New Street and 6s.8d. in half pound bread doles. 3s.4d. 6s.8d.
58	3	10s. 20s. the day before burial. 10s. the day before burial.

TABLE 53

Bequests to the poor to be made at times after the discretion of executors.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485	1	doe.
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93	2	A quarter of goods not bequeathed. 50s.
94	1	Residue of goods.
95	2	40s. 10s.
96	1	20s.
97		
98	1	Residuw of goods.
99	1	60 gowns, 60 sheets and 60 smocks.
1500	1	10mks. and more at doe.
1		
2	1	A gown with a hood and 5d. to five poor men.
3		
4	2	£6. Residue of goods not bequeathed.
5		
6	2	20 gowns, 100 pairs of carding combs and 100 spinning wheels. Residue of goods.
7	3	60 pairs of carding combs and 30 spinning wheels. 5 mks. and £5 to 'bedrede people'. 40s.
8	1	20s.
9	1	40 gowns and hoods.
10	2	£5 in amounts of 12d. £10.
11	3	doe. 40s. 40 pairs of carding combs and 20 spinning wheels.
12	1	10s. to each ward of the city.
13	2	20mks. 12 gowns.
14	1	£5 in ½d. doles.
15	1	20s.
16		
17		
18	2	12 gowns and kerchiefs. 40 gowns, 50 shirts, 50 smocks, 24 blankets to the bedridden of 4yds a piece and £10 for spinning wheels and carding combs.
19		
20		
21	1	£20 'to a prest and to dedis of charitie'.
22		
23	2	6s.8d. 33s.4d. in bread.
24	1	A gown, 1d. and a pair of beads to twenty four poor men.
25		
26	1	£6 13s.4d. to be dealt amongst forty householders of the city 'which be in povertie and goo not a begging', 50 spinning wheels, 50 pairs of carding combs, 50 shirts and 50 smocks.
27		
28		
29	1	10s. in bread and money.
30	3	doe. £10 'in Almes and other werks of charitie in Coventre and thereabout' and the residue of goods not bequeathed. 100 'kylne bloks'.
31	2	doe. 'A qwarter of whet or ells the value'.
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		

TABLE 53 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1537	1	10s.
38	2	Residue of goods. Residue of the third of goods given to pay for his burial.
39		
40	1	A kerchief and 12d. to every poor neighbours wife between her house and Hay Lane, 12d. to those between Little Park Street and Greyfriars Lane and 3d. to those in Greyfriars Lane.
41	1	Residue of goods.
42	2	1d. to thirteen poor people. 40s. to the poor and highways.
43	1	?
44	2	Residue of money from sale of a gown after 12d. has been given to Henry Hibert, priest. 12d. a house to forty householders, especially his neighbours, and residue of goods.
45	2	20s. 13 gowns 'in honour of our saviour Jesus and his twelve Appostells' and 13s.4d. among his poor neighbours.
46	4	4d. to every poor household in Cook Street. 4d. to every house in Smithford Street where he lives 'frome the hive unto the bridge' on both sides of the street. 13s.4d. in bread. 40s. and forgives all his debts to him by ppor men.
47		
48	4	6d.* and 1d. to every householder without New Gate. 2d.* 12d.* 12d.*
49	3	6d.* 2s.8d.* 2d.*
50	8	20d.* and more at doe. 8d.* and 13s. 4d. to the poor of Gosford Street ward . 4d.* 4d.* 12d.* 12 gowns. 20d.* 5s.*
51	13	2d.* 2d.* 12d.* and 4 smocks. 5s.* 2d.* 6d.* doe. 2d.* 12d.* and 20s. to poor spinners and knitters 'and to suche as they the executors shall knowe to be neady in deade and willing to worke if they were able'. 12d.* 12d.* 12d.* and 12d. to twenty poor householders in Gosford Street. 2d.*
52	3	2d. to every householder in Cook Street. 3s.4d.* in HT and 12d. in St.M and 40s. 10s.*
53	9	40s. 12d. in bread. 16d.* A groat to every neighbour from the procession way to Bailly Lane on both sides. 20s. £10. 4d. to every house in the street where she lived. 12d.* Money from sale of clothes.
54		
55	1	2d. to every house in the street where he lived.
56	2	12d. in bread. 3s.4d.
57	1	4 loads of wood.
58	4	2d. to every house from St.J's Chapel to Spon End. 5s. 6s.8d. 4d. to every house at St. John's Bridges.

Asterisks indicate that the bequest was to the poor chest in the testators parish church.

TABLE 54

Bequests to poor to be made by executors at times and for periods stipulated by testators.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94	1	To distribute ? during wife's life to the poor of Well Street ward about the Feast of the Nativity.
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7	1	For twenty years 'in the moost coldest tyme of the yere' 1000 faggots and 6s. and 6 houses 'upon the Sponecawsey' for twelve years or more for 'bedefolke', having each year a matress, 2 blankets, 2 pairs of sheets, a coverlet, a coverlet of rags and 5d. a week.
8		
9		
10		
11	1	Weekly for twelve months every Friday 8d. 'in the Worship of Crist Our Saviour and his xii apostells' and weekly for four years every Friday 4d.
12		
13	1	Weekly for ten years every Friday 'att my dore' 4d. in bread.
14		
15		
16		
17	1	For ten years about All Hallows 20 gowns, 20 shirts and 20 smocks and every year for 10 years in winter 1000 faggots.
18	1	Every Sunday for twelve months 3s. 4d. and on that day twelve months hence £10.
19		
20		
21		
22		
23	1	For five years every Friday to five poor men and five poor women 2½d. each.
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		
31		
32	1	Every years for seven years in winter 1000 faggots.
33		
34		
35		
36		

TABLE 54 continued

Year.	No.	Value.
1537		
38	1	In a year to the poor of Holy Trinity parish 6s.8d. on each of the following days: the Assumption of the Virgin, the Nativity of the Virgin, Michaelmas, All Hallows, Christmas Eve, Candlemas, Ash Wednesday, Passion Sunday, Good Friday and Whit Sunday.
39		
40	1	For twenty years in winter 40s. in bread and faggots and 12 shirts and 12 smocks.
41		
42		
43	2	Every Good Friday for an unspecified length of time 12d. Every Good Friday to thirteen poor people 1d. each 'yn ye 'honor of crist ande hys apostyls' for ever.
44	1	Every Good Friday 'for chrystes sake' for seven years 4 smocks and three shirts to poor men and women price 12d. each.
45		
46		
47		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52	1	10s. every quarter of the year out of a house and two tenements for ever.
53		
54		
55	1	For wife's life 8s. at Christmas time and 8s. at Easter time to householders 'that have grete charge of Chyldern wythyn this Cytye' out of the rent of a house of 20s.
56	1	Every Good Friday for ever 5s. out of the rent of a house
57		
58	1	Residue of rents from property after repairs and obit paid for to poor householders 'that ar in dekay other lame or impotent dwellyng in the saide Cytye' at Christmas and Easter.

TABLE 55

Bequests to the poor out of provision for obits.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92	1	6s.8d.*
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7	1	10s.*
8		
9	1	3s.4d.*
10		2s.* 8s. amd 3s.4d.**
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	1	residue.*
17	1	residue.*
18	1	13s.4d. from craft obit.*
19	1	4s.*
20		
21		
22		
23	1	3s.4d.*
24	1	residue.*
25		
26	1	6s.8d.*
27	1	residue.*
28		
29		
30	1	6s.8d.*
31		
32		
33		
34	1	13d.*
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40		
41	1	20s.*
42		
43		
44	1	20d.**
45		
46		
47		

TABLE 55 continued

Year.	No.	Value.
1548		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58	1	?*

TABLE 56

Bequests to the poor other than in Coventry.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93	1	A smock or a pair of shoes and 1d. to eight poor folk in Stivichall.
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6	1	20 oxen to poor husbandmen in the area about Coventry.
7		
8		
9		
10	1	40s. in amounts of 12d., 20d. and 2s. as need determines amongst poor husbandmen 'sum where I was born and sum in Everton Hants. and sum in Lemyngton parishe and sum where my oversears seeth nede'.
11	1	6s.8d. to the poor of Wrexham, Ches.
12		
13	1	1mk. a piece to twenty poor husbandmen in the area about Coventry.
14		
15		
16	1	60 plough shares and 60 coulters to poor husbandmen in the area about Coventry and the same to poor husbandmen in Pontesbury parish, Shrops. 'and in the Cuntrey therabouts'.
17		
18	1	£20 for oxen and kine to poor husbandmen in the area about Coventry.
19	1	50 plough shares and 50 coulters to poor husbandmen in Leics.
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26	1	£6 13s.4d. to forty poor householders 'which be in povertie and goo not a begging' in the area about Coventry and 50 plough shares and 50 coulters to poor husbandmen in the same area.
27		
28		
29		
30		
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		

TABLE 56 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.	
1536			
37			
38			
39			
40			
41			
42			
43			
44			
45			
46			
47			
48			
49			
50			
51			
52			
53	1	£10 to be dealt shortly after his decease by his executors 'amongeste the pore people in the Countrey & specially in such townes & places where I have gathere parte of my Substance'.	
54			
55			
56			
57			
58			

TABLE 57

Bequests to the Hospital of St. John the Baptist.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485	1	6s.8d.
86	1	20d. to the poor.
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92	1	5s.
93		
94	1	6s.8d.
95	1	3s.4d. to the poor.
96		
97		
98		
99	1	3s.4d. to the poor.
1500	1	5s. to the poor.
1		
2	1	6s.6d.
3		
4		
5		
6		
7	3	16s.8d. 'to the reparacon and mendyng of their bedyng'. 40s. 6s.8d.
8	1	20s. 'to by cloth for the poore peepills bedds'.
9	1	40d. to the poor.
10	1	5s. 'in lyning cloth' and 1d. each to twenty poor men 'to make them a Recreacon'.
11	2	3s.4d. to the poor. 3s.4d. to the poor.
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18	1	80yds of 'white ffreris' for 'the matntenance of the poore folks bedds'.
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30	1	3s.4d. and a 'Cowched cloth of the lyfe of saint John ahich was maister John Hadleys'.
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		
44		
45		

TABLE 58

Bequests to poor maidens marriages.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93	1	A quarter of goods not bequeathed in amounts of 6s. 8d. in household goods.
94		
95		
96		
97		
98	1	£20 for poor maidens marriages and the repair of highways.
99	1	A noble to sixty poor maidens in money or household goods.
1500	1	£10 to poor maidens marriages and the repair of highways and more at doe.
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6	1	20s. each to twenty poor maidens in Warwickshire 'and specialy within this Citie of Coventre'.
7	3	20s. each to twenty poor maidens born in Coventry. £5 in household goods. A third of plate not bequeathed to poor maidens and the poor.
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13	1	1mk. each to twenty poor maidens.
14		
15		
16	1	3s.4d. each to forty poor maidens.
17	1	£1 each to thirteen poor maidens.
18	1	£60 to be distributed in household goods to poor maidens.
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40	1	£20 to be distributed in amounts not less than 10s.
41		
42		
43		

TABLE 58 continued

Year.	No.	Value.
1544		
45		
46		
47		
48		
49		
50	1	£10 to be distributed in amounts of 10s.
51		
52	1	20 marks to be distributed amounts of 6s.8d.
53	1	£6 13s.4d. to be distributed in amounts of 5s.
54		
55		
56		
57		
58	1	doe.

TABLE 59
Bequests for the repair of highways, bridges, etc.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93	1	£10 to highways between Coventry and Sutton, 30s. between Coventry and Allesley, 30s. between Allesley and Meriden, half the money from all his debts in Shrewsbury and all the owed him by 'Tilley' of the same place to repair Bilstone Lane, 5s. to Canley Lane, 40d. to highways between Coventry and Kenilworth, 6s.8d. to the repair of Stoneleigh church and bridge, 33s.4d. to Herningham bridge, 33s.4d. to Longforth bridge, 13s.4d. to Fosse bridge, 6s. to Binley bridge and a quarter of all goods not bequeathed to repair the highways 'towards Sutton'.
94	1	Rents from lands in hands of John Boteler to be given yearly to repair roads between Coventry and Corley.
95		
96		
97		
98		
99	1	£20 to highways and bridges where there is most need.
1500	1	£10 to poor maidens marriages and the repair of highways and more at doe.
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7	2	£100 to highways about Coventry, rents from lands in Packington each year to be given to same purpose and 5mks. to the bridge of Rochester, Kent. 10mks. to highways within a mile of Coventry.
8		
9		
10	2	£5 to highways about Coventry. £10 to highways about Coventry.
11	1	£10 to highways where most need is and 10s. to the bridge at Bridgenorth, Staffs.
12	1	6s. 8d. to the parish of Lillington 'when they doo cary for the bridge of Chesford' and £20 to th bridge itself and 20s. to Bubenhall bridge.
13	1	10mks. to the highways about Coventry.
14		
15		
16	1	5mks. to Stivichall Lane.
17	1	£50 to highways about Coventry.
18	1	£20 to highways about Coventry.
19	1	20s. to 'Wichnore brigge' [sic]. 20s. to 'Beylake brigge' [sic] and 6s.8d. to 'lowpyn brigge' [sic].
20		
21		
22		
23		
24	1	20s. to repair of causeway at 'Adrose' [sic].
25		
26	1	20s. to repair 'the waye' in Hockliffe, 20s. to repair 'the waye in the Solett', 6s.8d. to repair the bridge between Weedon and Towcester called 'the hermitage', and 20s. to the bridge between Shenley and 'venyse Stratforde'.

TABLE 59 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1527		
28		
29		
30	1	£10 to repair of Radford Lane.
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38	1	£3 6s.8d. to highways within two miles of Coventry.
39		
40	1	£20 to highways about Coventry.
41		
42	1	40s. to poor people and highways.
43		
44	1	£3 16s. to repair of highways and bridges of which Wynnall bridge is to be one.
45	1	20s. each to repair of Ryton and Wynnall bridges.
46		
47		
48		
49		
50	1	doe to highways about Coventry, but at least 40s.
51		
52	1	£6 13s.4d. to 'Alchurche cawsye' [sic].
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58	1	doe.

TABLE 60
Bequests for public works.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6	1	£6 8s.4d. towards the making of the new cross in Cross Cheaping and 20s. to the Common Box.
7	2	£40 towards the making of the new conduit in the city 'whan it is newe made', 5 mks. towards the making of the new cross and 5 mks. to the Common Box. £10 towards the making of the conduit and the new cross.
8		
9		
10	1	5 mks. towards the making of the new conduit and £20 towards the making of the new cross 'if any be made'.
11		
12	1	£3 6s.8d. towards the new cross at Cross Cheaping and £3 6s.8d. to the Common Box.
13		
14		
15		
16	1	A house in Little Park Street to Bailly Lane ward 'toward toward the reperacon of the well and other chorges that herafter shall fall to the saide ward'.
17	1	£3 6s.8d. to the Common Box 'to be applyed for the Comen Welth and for the Comen when nede shall require and noon otherwise to be used'.
18	2	10s. to the Common Box. A close beside St. Nicholas' church worth 26s.8d. and a close at Hill Cross worth 16s. a year to the Common Box, a house at Jordan Well worth 26s.8d. a year towards the repair of the conduit, £20 towards the making of the new cross in Cross Cheaping and £20 for a 'stock' to buy corn with at such times as its price increases 'to bryng the markett downe as farr as this said some of £20 will extende'.
19	1	20s. towards the cross at Cross Cheaping, 10s. to repair the the conduit 'that ys to say to make a grate their' and 20s.
20		to the Common Box.
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		

TABLE 60 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1530		
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		
44	1	£3 6s.8d. to the Common Box.
45		
46		
47		
48		
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 61
Bequests to education.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10	2	40s. 'to John Copland my scoler'. 40s. to the prior of Coventry to be the executor of her will 'to a pore skolar in Cambrydge or Oxford'.
11		
12	1	40s. 'to Thomas my scoler of Cambrige'.
13		
14		
15		
16		
17	1	£20 to poor scholars of Oxford and Cambridge 'towards their exhibicion suche as can be thought most sadde and vertuous'.
18	1	40s. a year up to £10 to 'Maister Fowler' his son-in-law for his exhibition and 40s. a year up to £10 to John-A-Wood his wife's son towards his exhibition at Oxford.
19	1	6s.8d. every quarter for two years to Walter Browne, priest, for his exhibition at Oxford and rents of lands worth 40s. a year to a scholar of Oxford towards his exhibition.
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26	1	26s.8d. a year for four years to Richard Solson, scholar.
27		
28		
29		
30	1	6s.8d. a year for three years to a clerk of the Greyfriars being a student of Oxford or Cambridge, who was to be chosen by the churchwardens of Holy Trinity. A new clerk to be chosen every three years.
31		
32		
33		
34		
35		
36		
37		

TABLE 61 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.	
1538			
39			
40			
41			
42			
43			
44	1	£20	to his son Julinus Palmer 'for his exhibicon at Scole'.
45			
46			
47			
48			
49			
50			
51			
52			
53			
54			
55			
56			
57			
58			

TABLE 62

Bequests to the Jesus Hall(priests rooms) attached to Holy Trinity.

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89		
90		
91		
92		
93		
94		
95		
96		
97		
98		
99		
1500		
1		
2		
3		
4	1	8d.
5	1	12d.
6		
7	1	2s.
8		
9	2	3s.4d., 'a mete cloth of diaper the iirde best' and 'a Towell of diaper the iiiith next the best'.
10	1	3s.4d. 'for the supportation of the fewell'.
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16	1	16d.
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26	1	6s.8d.
27		
28		
29		
30		
31	1	'a brasse pott & a Chaysyngdishe'.
32		
33		
34	1	12d. and 'a brase pot & a towell'.
35		
36		
37		
38		
39		
40		
41		
42		
43		
44		
45		
46		

TABLE 62 continued

Year.	No.	Value.
1547		
48	1	4s.
49		
50		
51		
52		
53		
54		
55		
56		
57		
58		

TABLE 63
Bequests to priests(excluding those to priests with familial ties and personal chaplains).

Year.	No.	Value.
1485		
86		
87		
88		
89	1	'psalterium meum', a black gown and 10s. to Richard Skryven.
90		
91		
92	1	A tawny gown with shanks to Ralph Hykks.
93		
94		
95	1	4yds. of green woollen cloth and 4yds of blue woollen cloth to Richard Skryven and a tawny gown and ? to William Pratte.
96		
97		
98	1	20s. to Thomas ————.
99		
1500		
1	1	6s.8d. to Christopher Ive.
2		
3	1	3s.4d. to Thomas Clements.
4		
5		
6	1	40s. and a black gown with a hood to Richard Norres.
7	2	40s. to Richard Norres and 20s. to John Illage. 6s.8d. to John Smyth.
8	1	6s.8d. to Roger Cowche.
9		
10	1	6s.8d. to the Warden of Knowle.
11	2	'A pounsed pece of silver A maser with a narowe bond A dosen silver sponys A bordclothe A peyre of shets' to Robert Bromley and 3s.4d. to John Wigston. 3s.4d. to Richard Norres and 3s.4d. to Roger Cowche.
12	1	A black gown or 13s.4d. to Thomas Greene and 40s. to Robert Fleming.
13	1	A black gown to Thomas Grene.
14		
15	1	'my best jakett' to Thomas Grene.
16		
17		
18	3	A black gown to Richard Edmunds. A black gown to Robert Fisher. 40s. and a black gown to John Porter, a gown with a hood and 40s. 'to the parisshe prest' and 4 yds. of black cloth to William Bailie, Ralph Shewyr, William Walker, Richard Norres. William Danyell and Roger Cowche
19	2	'A gowne cloth' to Christopher ————. 5yds. of black cloth to Robert Fisher and a black gown to Harry ————.
20		
21		
22		
23		
24	1	3s.4d. to William Mylner, 6s.8d. to Christopher ————., a gown to John Illage, 3s.4d. to Richard Edmunds and 4d. to every other priest in the city.
25		
26		
27		
28		
29	1	6s.8d. and a gown hood 'accordyng to his degre' to William Mylner, a black gown to Henry Marler and 6s.8d. and a black gown to Thomas Hykks.

TABLE 63 continued.

Year.	No.	Value.
1530	2	40s. and 'my best horsse' to Richard Shirley. 4d. 'to the iii Chantre prests of Saynt Johns'.
31		
32		
33		
34	2	A pair of sheets to Henry Marler, John Farmer and ———— Fenton. 3s.4d. and a gown each to John Derby and William Shelston and his violet gown to Humphrey Hartell.
35		
36		
37	1	His bay horse to Robert Abbots.
38	2	3s.4d. and a pair of sheets to Godfrey ————. 6s.8d. 'to the Reverant father in god John Suffragane to my lord of Chester'.
39		
40	1	A black gown to Symon Bellister and a black worsted doublet to John Farmer.
41	1	A tawny worsted doublet to Edward Lysterly.
42		
43	1	4yds. of black cloth to make a gown to Roger Capp and John Farmer and 6s.8d. to Richard Lee.
44	5	'my thyrd gowne furred with blacke lamb' to William Madder and 12d. 'to the pore preste at ye White freers'. A black gown to John Caryngton. 12d. to Harry Hybert from the sale of clothes. 40s. for a black gown to Robert Frankelen his 'ghostly father'. 'a fyne golde rynge weynge an angell noble and a fyne gowne clothe with a hoode' to John Wigston.
45		'my fatherbedd wych I do ly on' to John Farmer. 40d. to Harry Hybert. 6s.8d. to Henry Hybert 'to pray for my solle and to holpen him to his lerning'.
46		
47		
48	1	'the feder bed yt I ly on & ye bollster' to John Bateman.
49	1	4d. to Henry Randle.
50	2	A worsted jacket to Richard Branker. 'my blocker and my framyng sawe' to John Farmer.
51	1	5s. to Thomas Brown.
52	1	A candlestick to John Farmer.
53		
54		
55	1	3s.4d. to Nicholas Capenhurst and 12d. to Henry Randle.
56	1	Two tenements and a garden in the city for the time of his life to William Mathew.
57	1	'my greatest panne my best pott my gretest caudron fowre platters foure sawcers ii pewter dysshes my carpet coveryng A walle bed A brand Iren my mantell ii pewter potts ii of my best Candyllsrycks A Chasyng dysshe A whyte basyn And my husbands best Jakytt' to Nicholas Capenhurst.
58		

TABLE 64

Numbers of clergy as witnesses(1), overseers(2) and executors(3) of wills (excluding clergy who were related to the testator).

Year.	1.	2.	3.
1485			
86			
87			
88			
89	2	1	
90			
91			
92	1	1	
93	2	1	
94	2	(1)	
95	3	(1)	
96	1		
97	1		
98	1	(1)	
99		1	
1500	1	1 (1)	
1	1		
2	1		
3	1		
4	2		
5	5	1	
6	3	(1)	
7	2	(1)	(1)
8	1	(1)	
9	3	1 (1)	
10	8	2 (3)	
11	6	1	
12		1	
13			
14	3	(1)	
15	1		
16		1	
17			
18	4	1	(1)
19	3		
20			
21	2	(1)	
22	1		
23	1		
24	4		
25	2		
26			
27		1	
28	3		
29	2		
30	8		1 (1)
31	7		(1)
32	1		
33	2		
34	2	(1)	
35	2		
36	2		
37	11	(1)	1
38	8	3 (1)	
39	8	(2)	1
40	3	1	
41	7	2	(1)
42	6	2	
43	4		
44	10	(3)	
45	9	(1)	1
46	9	(1)	

TABLE 64 continued.

Year.	1.	2.	3.
1547	3		
48	5		
49	4		
50	5		
51	2	(1)	
52	4		
53	5	2	1
54	2	1 (1)	
55			
56	3	1	
57	15	1 (1)	
58	14	1 (5)	

The first number indicates the number of wills in which a member of the clergy appears as a witness, overseer or executor of a will. The number in brackets indicates the number of wills in which a member of the clergy appears as overseer or executor to a will as well as a witness.

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